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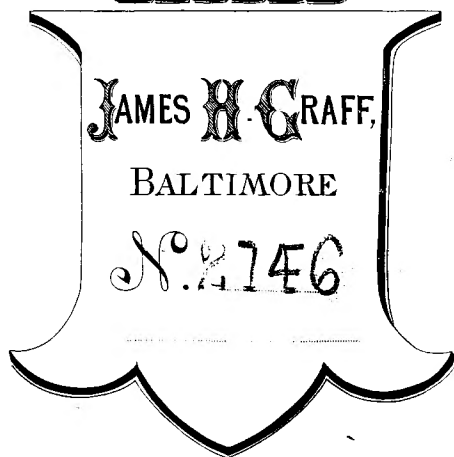
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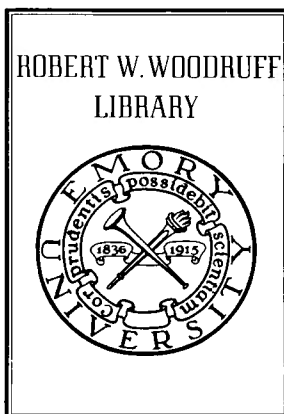
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FOSTER BROTHERS

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OF THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LIFE  
OF TWO YOUNG MEN.

BY  
THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE FAMILY SCAPEGRACE."

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY

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THE  
FOSTER BROTHERS;  
BEING  
A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE  
LIFE OF TWO YOUNG MEN.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SQUARE AND THE MEWS.

PON the same night, early in this present century, within a few hours of one another and within a few doors, Adolphus Henry Plantagenet Brooks Hollis and Robert Birt were born; the one in Bulbul Square, and the other just round the corner in Bulbul Mews; the straw that was laid down so thickly for the sake of Honourable Madam, dulled the sound of the passing chariots for her coachman's wife, while she was sharing with her that bitter portion bequeathed to womankind by Mother Eve. Some people would, perhaps, have been distressed at not having the exclusive benefit of their precaution all to themselves; but not so was Mrs. Hollis. The great doctor, her professional attendant, even, at the instance of his noble patient,—“My good Sarah, Sir Toby, my

waiting-maid that was, you know, if you would be so very kind,—” actually himself stepped up to that little *entresol*, between the stables and nothing, upon the second day, and allowed that Nature was doing her work there very well; considering (he meant) that Mr. Field, the quiet person in dull black, who might have taken a hundredweight of fern-seed, so invisible was he to Sir Toby, was a medical nobody, and Sarah Birt not of a rank in life to put Nature out of her way. Queer bottles with corks in the middle of them, soft snowy linen, comfortable stuff in saucepans, and a kindly message or two more prized than any of those crumbs from the rich man’s table, found their way from the mistress to her servant. Common Sorrow, the great begetter of Love, is dreadfully promiscuous; and, besides that, it was Christmas time.

One might tell that by the excessive cold of the streets; by the pure snow which, though it fell so noiselessly, was at once espied and swept up into half-liquid slosh in gutters, or cast down from the roofs of houses defiled with soot; by the sham holly and mock mistletoe in the provision shops, and the increase of starving faces glued against their window-panes; by the shivering throngs that besieged workhouse doors at night, and froze outside the blank walls when it was full; and by the sudden augmentation of the begging fraternity, who reminded you of the epoch point blank, with their “Six-pence, your honour, for a poor fellow, this cold Christmas time!” whereat some say, “Why, bless my heart, and so it is!” and give; and some, “Upon my soul,

my good man, I have nothing for you !” and so pass on, jingling their money ; and some——Let us see for ourselves what this man will do, for instance, who must needs be a dean at least, if not a bishop, by his sleek good looks ; whose double chin resembles the big B before Benevolence itself : what will he do for yon cringing vagabond, so boastful of his blue hands and bleeding feet, who dogs him as a lawyer M.P. dogs a minister ? He will give him a sovereign surely, at the very least, now that he has made him limp from Pall Mall to Bond Street !

“Oh, my lord !” (the lawyer M.P. is not a more subtle strategist,) “will your lordship, for Heaven’s sake, give me a shilling—give me a shill—shill—shilling ;” (interruption on the pavement on the part of an old apple-woman warmed with gin, who drives the beggar into the street, and causes even Benevolence itself to knit its brows.) “Give me, my lord, a shill—shill——[*You cut away, you blackguard !*]” aside to another gentleman of the same profession. “I’ve been a follering of this ’un for a mile and more, and do ye think I’m going to let you pick my honest gains out of my pocket]——a shill—shill—give me *sixpence*, and may Heaven bless your worship ; give me six—six——” They had got to Bulbul Square by this time, and the beggar, seeing his friend pull up his shirt-collars, knew very well that he must be nearing his destination, and that there was not much time to lose——“Oh, Sir, pray give me a *copper*, give me only a cop—cop—cop——.”

“I tell you what I’ll give you, my good fellow, if **you**

don't move on," said the other, speaking for the first time ; " I'll give you in charge to the police."

" Well, that's a blessed fine thing for a Christmas box, that is," said the beggar, admiringly : " here's a game in a civilised *community* ; why, darn your looks, if I didn't think you was a Christian !"

He was not the first, by any means, who had been misled by the appearance of Sir Toby Ruffles, M.D. ; and really, when that gentleman arrived in his fair patient's room up stairs, he had very much the air of a ministering angel whose wings had been temporarily left below with his great-coat and umbrella. When he said, " How are we this fine morning ?" to the lily mother with her rose-bud child beside her, it was as though the south wind was whispering.

" Quite well, doctor ; quite strong, and so grateful !" was the answer ; " those bells" (faintly) " draw tears from me at every peal."

" Yes, a most annoying clamour, certainly, my dear Madam ; but a line from me to Mr. Poppy, the incumbent, will soon stop that."

" Stop them ! oh no, Sir Toby, not for worlds ; think what a host of comfort they must bring to others, who need indeed spiritual aid far less than I, perhaps, but who will forget weakness, poverty, discomfort, in their pleasant sounds, and bless His name whose birth they joy to tell of."

" Febrile symptoms," muttered Sir Toby ; " head affected."

" And oh, doctor ! I have some bad news indeed from

Sarah; they say that she is sinking: Sarah Birt, you know, whom you were so kind about only a few hours ago. You'll go again, won't you, doctor? Anything I can send——." The poor lily broke down suddenly, and the dew fell from her hidden eyes like rain.

"My dear Madam, this excitement is ruinous; I'll go at once. Compose yourself, I beg; we will do all we can for the young person in the Mews, believe me."

To distress a lady of title would have been about the last crime Sir Toby could be accused of, but the duty Mrs. Hollis thus imposed upon him for the second time was especially distasteful; it seemed to him, somehow, that a visit of his to any of the lower classes was, mathematically speaking, a sort of waste of power, like setting Nasmyth's great steam-hammer to crack nuts. "There are some women in the world, I do believe," he muttered to himself, "who would send for the Archbishop of Canterbury to an expiring costermonger. The Mews, indeed!"—his serene expression began to dimple into smiles—"with yonder pump for Helicon, and these steep stairs for green Parnassus!"

Sir Toby Ruffles, such is the genial influence of a joke of our own making, entered the little garret-room a gladder and a better man. Within a stone's throw of that place there were scores of human habitations (with death and new-born life, perhaps, in the same chamber too), removed many degrees lower from that of Sarah Birt than was hers from the apartment of her mistress, and yet there was contrast enough to strike Sir Toby forcibly. The rosy, subdued light of the room,



which he had but just quitted, seemed scarcely to have come from the same source with these pale, sickly gleams ; its fresh warm atmosphere was exchanged for a smoky cold one ; the odours of Bond Street for the steam from a neighbouring dunghill ; and instead of the huge chair by the fire, and the portly nurse, there was a rickety three-legged stool, and a little girl "to mind the baby." Although there were five living beings within this room, there was an awful stillness : the girl sat on the stool with her head bowed down upon her knees, weeping ; the man who had taken the fern-seed, dressed in the same dull suit, stood by the bed's head outside the curtain, and not in sight of the rest of the occupants of the apartment ; another knelt upon the opposite side of the bed, with his head hidden in the coverlid, his large frame shaken with suppressed sobs ; a thin white hand was beneath his lips, with the ring upon the finger which he had placed there not a year before, and for all he held it there so tightly, that hand was getting cold : its fellow hand and arm were entwined around a nestling infant, close, close, soon to be rigid there, and the mother's eyes, half shut, but overflowing with love, were fixed upon her husband.

Sir Toby Ruffles did a thing which he never expected to have caught himself doing in an *entresol* between a stable and nothing—he took off his hat ; nay, suddenly becoming aware that Mr. Field was, at least, before his eyes, if only as an optical delusion, he exchanged a rapid telegraphic communication with that gentleman, and then observed audibly, "Poor thing ! poor thing !"

At this the half-shut eyes upon the bed strove to reopen. A murmur, whose meaning the husband could not catch, was understood in an instant by the surgeon's practised ear. "She wants," said he, "to speak to you, Sir Toby."

"To *me*?" said that gentleman; "goodness gracious, bless my soul!" Having fortified himself with which pious ejaculation, he leant down over the dying woman, and set his ear to her pale lips.

"My love to my kind mistress," they said, very slowly; "and for the sake of her own dear boy that was born to her upon the same day, pray her to——"

"Take care of this little man," Sir Toby suggested kindly; "oh! yes, certainly." He was going to elevate himself to his usual height again, for his cravat was too starched and his habit too plethoric for stooping with comfort, but the dying eyes again entreated him to listen.

"Well, my good woman, what more, what more?" said he.

"Tell her,"—the voice sank very low this time,—"*in memory of the myrtle bough, I ask this of her heart.*"

"I will, I will," said the knight, as he rose up hastily. What a difference between the earnest, prayerful accents of the speaker, and the half impatient, half forbearing tones of the listener!

"Sinking fast; delirium," thought Sir Toby again; for he was one of that huge class who set down everything they cannot understand as unintelligible, forgetting what has been well said by the great German,—that the best handwriting may be hard to read by twilight.

"Obviously wandering, Mr. Field. I suppose I can be of no further use," he whispered. Indeed, it was getting near one of Sir Toby's feeding times, and the silent monitor within, whose slightest hint was law to him, was strenuous of reminder that there was sweetbread at home for luncheon.

"Good-morning, my friend," said he; "bear up, my good man," (it was astonishing to hear the amount of goodness this gentleman dispensed in adjectives,) "I will look in again, depend upon it."

Sir Toby got into his brougham, which had come to fetch him in the square, smiling to himself at the weakness of the female character. "One likes the bells because they make her cry, and the other, 'for the sake of the mistletoe,' says she, 'ask Mrs. Hollis to love my baby;'" the bells reminded *her*, too, of Christmas time, and so her head ran on to mistletoe, I suppose. Well! well!"

In the meantime, in Sarah Birt's death-chamber, another person had supplied Sir Toby's place; a woman, whose naturally ruddy-looking face bore signs of recent sickness or sorrow; a neat cap, trimmed with black ribbon, was all that she could muster of the trappings and suits of woe, but there was mourning about her motherly heart enough and to spare. Mrs. Groves, the small tailor's wife in Rag Street, had but just lost her infant, the youngest boy of seven, who might have been very well spared, as one would have thought; but she was weak-minded, like the rest of the women, and, for her part, entertained a very different opinion. Mr. Field, anticipating but too well what was about to happen, had

sent for her to take charge of the poor child whose orphanage was now so fast approaching, and she had come very willingly ; she and her husband were under many and great obligations to the good doctor, and her disposition, although very far from being exemplary, was a grateful one. Her motto, though she did not know it, was "a warm friend or a bitter enemy ;" and her crest, had she chosen a fit one, should have been a lamb *rampant* or a griffin *couchant*. "You never know where to take Mrs. Groves," was the tribute usually accorded to her by her neighbours. Stout as she was, and swiftly as she yet moved, she entered the room quite noiselessly, and took her place by the side of Mr. Field without the rest being aware of her presence.

"Is Mr. Poppy coming?" whispered he, somewhat impatiently ; "you called there on your way, I hope, as I requested."

"Yes, I called, but *he* isn't coming, bless you ; there's a wedding breakfast at Lord Slackfield's, in the square."

"But did you say the woman was dying, Mrs. Groves?"

"Yes, sure ; the man said that it was as much as his place was worth to disturb his reverence at such a time as that, so I went to the place myself : scores of people about the door, besides three policemen. 'None of my gammon,' they said, when I told them my business, and 'wouldn't I like a silver spoon or so for my Christmas pudding ;' them divils thought I was a thief."

"Hush, Mrs. Groves. I should think" (he murmured to himself) "there could be no objection to my saying a prayer or two, since Mr. Poppy is not here."

"No objection," exclaimed the tailor's wife, overhearing him ; " I only know, if the precious old humbug did come canting here, I'd walk ; why, you are worth five thousand of such as him."

"Silence, woman ! shame upon you at such a time as this," said the doctor ; and kneeling down at once, Mr. Field prayed earnestly aloud, repeating such forms as he remembered from the *Visitation of the Sick*, and extemporising others, as well as he was able, to suit the particular circumstances of the case. The little girl, at first too astonished to move, presently slid off the three-legged stool and knelt along with him ; between them, after a little, Mrs. Groves sank down ; a half-stifled response broke now and then from the agonised husband, and the dying woman's lips moved with that dumb eloquence more dear to God than words : "And on this motherless child do thou look down, born at the birth-time of his blessed Saviour."

"Aye," sobbed Mrs. Groves, with that strange delight in close religious parallel which belongs to her class, "and in a stable too."

The eyes of the dying woman, which had been gradually growing dull and meaningless, lit up when Mr. Field spoke of her child, with a grateful joy ; their expression had barely faded, and the features were still rippled over by a trusting smile, when Mrs. Groves stooped down and disengaged the still sleeping infant from the arm that could no longer shelter or fondle it mayhap the soul was in the presence of God at the time the widower yet held, as he thought, her loving hand in his !



Presently Mr. Field touched him gently upon the shoulder, led him into the small room adjoining, and left him in it alone ; and it seemed to the strong man for hours, there, that the sun had fallen from Heaven, and utter darkness was over the face of all things for ever.





## CHAPTER II.

“NEXT TO BLOOD IS MILK.”

**T**HE Honourable Henry Hollis was the second son, said Debrett, of the late Lord and Lady Rexham, the latter of whom had enjoyed the admiration of the First Gentleman in Europe before he took to stays. The founder of the Rexham race itself was a female (which Debrett did *not* say), and the family dated as far back as the happy restoration of his sacred Majesty Charles the Second; only once, in the person of the Honourable Madam whom we are already acquainted with, had it demeaned itself by an alliance with trade. She was the daughter of a Mr. Brooks, a retired manufacturer of Manchester, and to her one hundred thousand pounds and youthful graces Mr. Henry Hollis had delivered himself up a victim in his eight-and-fortieth year. He had a few debts, it is true, and his constitution was slightly enervated, but everybody said that the marriage was a great sacrifice, and an immense thing for the Brookses;—so perhaps it was. Women, however, as Sir

Toby would have said, are very incomprehensible beings, and it was actually rumoured that Kitty Brooks did all she could to hold to her engagement with young Lilton, whose father was a second class warehouseman, and who, for his own part, had nothing but a writership, or something of that sort, of about a thousand a year, in India, which old Brooks himself had obtained for him ; there, people said, lay the ingratitude of the thing : although the match had been arranged, and the paternal consent given, was it not clearly the duty of a well-principled young man to give her up to such a much more eligible suitor as was Mr. Hollis ?

What a selfish piece of business would have been the contrary behaviour ! and to prevent that egotistical act was not the father justified—to use his own expression—in putting the screw on ? that is to say, in threatening to take the writership away again, which his influence could easily accomplish, and to wash his hands of his rebellious portionless daughter for ever ? At all events, there was no question about the matter now : the present Lord Rexham, an old gentleman weakminded from his youth up, was, from circumstances which we are not at liberty to reveal—by no means likely to marry ; so that out of the Brooks' crab-apple graft there had now shot forth a branch which might even bear golden pippins—coronets ! A well-principled young man at Badanaspoor, or elsewhere, might surely therefore be thankful that his Kitty had a fate so fortunate and so superior to that of producing embryo civil and military servants for the East India Company.

It was to say something concerning the little heir presumptive and his mother that Mr. Hollis requested an interview with Sir Toby Ruffles on the ensuing day to that on which Sarah Birt, his coachman's wife, had died ; he beckoned him upon his way up to his patient's room into the library, and closed the door.

"Ruffles, how are you? My wife is getting on but slowly, I fear."

"Slowly, my dear Sir!" replied the other, "quite the contrary; without any boast of my own skill, she's——"

"There, there, I don't want any of your professional advertisements; what I mean to say is, she is weakly, delicate, unfit to suckle the child."

"Wean it? oh, certainly, that, it is my deliberate opinion, she ought to do; why did you not ask for it at once, my dear Sir? besides" (Sir Toby knew not a little of the Hollis family secrets, and could afford to give bitter for bitter) "a woman's shape suffers so; but there will be some opposition, I fear."

"I think not," replied the other, grimly. "Now about a nurse. Do you know of one, well-conducted, respectable, who will leave her own brat and come here at once with a proper sense of her responsibilities? Next to blood, in my opinion, is milk, Ruffles;" and the Hon. Henry Hollis looked up at the portrait of his sainted mother, which guarded the mantelpiece, as if for corroboration of that sentiment.

"I will procure one without delay, my dear Sir, rely upon me."

"Well, that means, Ruffles, you *don't* know of one;

now *I* do. I was going over to see Saltfish in her stable yesterday—the poor mare has a shocking cough, I am sorry to say—and I found my coachman a good deal cut up about his wife ; she is dead, it seems, and has left an infant, which a neighbour of hers, a Mrs. Groves, is suckling ; a respectable woman enough, very healthy, and in every respect suitable. Now you engage her."

"What ! to bring up both the children ? Why, my dear Sir, that would be madness."

"So I should think," rejoined Mr. Hollis ; "and you must be mad to think of such a thing. Why that is just what she told me (curse her impudence) when I spoke to her on the subject. I mean, of course, that the woman should give up this little Birt, which could be brought up by hand anywhere, and take to my child instead."

"Well, well, I dare say it can be managed," said the doctor, "and especially if you have no objection to have the coachman's boy in the house ; there will be a difficulty with the father else, perhaps ; its mother seemed to depend upon Mrs. Hollis taking care of it somehow."

"Did she ? well, I like that. Have I been so very considerate about my own immediate descendants, then, that you think it's likely I am going to take up with one of my drunken coachman's ?"

"Mr. Hollis," urged Sir Toby, quietly, "it is perfectly indifferent to me whether you treat the brat as one of your own family, or cause him to be comfortably brought up for a year or two at home ; my professional duty is simply to warn you that the two disappointments of having to wean her child, and of being forbidden to fulfil the dying re-



quest of her favourite servant, will have an effect upon Mrs. Hollis's health for which I will not be answerable. She is very sentimental, not to say foolish, about such matters ; and as for your reasoning with her" (seeing Mr. Hollis about to stride up stairs with an expression of ultra-marital authority), "you'll kill her, Sir, in the state in which she now is, in ten minutes. Now let me go, my friend," added he, persuasively, "let me go, and I will make the best terms I can for you."

"Well, go then," muttered the happy father, "go ;" adding, as the door closed upon the unconscious knight, a very extreme limit for his destination.

Mrs. Hollis, as her doctor had expected, was a good deal "thrown back" in her prospects of recovery by the news of poor Sarah's death ; she had been her waiting maid for years in the old happy days—her trustworthy confidante and humble sympathiser ; and her mistress felt that from among the brilliant crowd in which she had begun to move, she could have borne to have missed any face rather than that humble one at home, which knew how to weep with her as well as to smile. She had regretted the girl's attachment to Birt the coachman (who, although a good fellow in the main, was addicted over-much to beer), and had striven, as much as her kind nature would permit her, to prevent it ; thereby unconsciously repaying Sarah's as fruitless efforts to induce her young mistress not to dispose of herself to her present honourable possessor. The lady had certainly made a worse bargain than the servant, and what was still sadder, she had by this time got to know it.

People of fashion rarely, although sometimes, chastise their wives as the democracy do ; but they speak broomsticks although they may use none. Some pale-faced women there are, ay peeresses, who, venturing to remove their masks a breathing space, disclose to observant eyes such heel-marks on their brows as are far worse than knife-stabs or outward bruises. What depths of degradation, what trodden-out jealousies, what shuddering fears, are to be read sometimes upon unruffled coroneted brows ! What awful looks are sometimes to be seen sweeping over noble faces, dead to malice one would have hoped, since dead to feeling, when the wife speaks a truth unwelcome, or interrupts the long-drawn solemn drawl of her liege lord ! Better to be the anticipative Betsey—already black-eyed Betsey—when her lord and master, her lover and cherisher, remarks with meaning, "You would, would you ? wait till I get you home"—than any one of these.

Sir Toby Ruffles was not a wise man by any means, but he was a very keen observer, and he knew precisely the state of domestic relation which existed between Mr. and Mrs. Hollis. This was what he said when he arrived in his patient's room after his late interview with her husband :—

"We are certainly not so well this morning, my dear Madam, are we ? We are flushed—we are excited—we have rather red eyes, I am afraid, again."

If Sir Toby was speaking editorially, and of himself, *we* certainly had ; but he was accustomed to put his patients into the first person plural, and he referred to Mrs. Hollis's

organs of vision, and not his own. "Now, my dear good lady, we must stop this ; you will do harm, positive harm, to the little darling here."

The flush vanished away from her cheek as the sunlight vanishes before the wind-swept April clouds, and her heart misgave her that some still heavier ones than had as yet overshadowed her young life were labouring up. "Suppose, now, for a little while he leaves you, for both your sakes?"

"Oh no, oh no, dear doctor ! no, for the love of God : you don't know what this is to me, this blessed gift. I will do all you tell me, I will be cheerful, strong ; but this is my only comfort, my——"

"Why the fact is, my very dear Madam," said Sir Toby, resolving to bring up his reserve at once, since the resistance was likely to be so violent, "your good husband begged me"—the fragile form which in its passionate excitement had risen from the pillow, dropped back at once—"to insist on this for your own health's sake ; he is so anxious, naturally anxious for your swift recovery. You will see the dear child always, every day, except perhaps just at first, to accustom you to its absence. We shall have a capital nurse, ay and a playfellow too, for the little lord (as he will be by-and-by, I hope,) in the very house. I told Mr. Hollis of poor Sarah Birt's last wish, that you should have the care of her child, and he consented to its coming here at once. 'Nothing,' he said, 'would give him a greater pleasure, since he knew that it would please you.'" A sickly smile lit up the young wife's features for an instant in thankfulness to the speaker

for his well-meaning lie ; a month or two ago, perhaps, it would have kindled hope's dying embers, and shed a genuine radiance on her face ; but the time for that was passed. " God's will be done," she murmured ; and presently, " What message did poor Sarah send to me ? "

" Oh, poor thing, her humble duty to you, and she hoped that her child, being born at the same time with yours, would give you an additional interest in it ; something of that sort, and then she began to wander, saying you were to do it for the mistletoe's sake, and Christmas time."

" Mistletoe, doctor ! are your sure ? "

" Yes, quite, unless, however, it was elder-berries ; and now, if you will allow me, by-the-bye, I will go and see after your little charge, and the nurse whom I hope to get for his lordship here. How pleased Mr. Hollis will be to hear that you have borne up so admirably. By-bye, Baby Beautiful ; — why, it is growing like its mother already, I do declare ! "





## CHAPTER III.

A SPARTAN (FOSTER) MOTHER.

**S**IR TOBY stepped down stairs quite radiant; his victory was complete, and had been effected with less loss to the other side than he had anticipated. "Now," thought he, "there's only this woman Groves to be got over, and the thing is done."

"Only those three fellows on the bridge to manage," was probably Lars Porsena's disparaging remark, when he stood with his great host so close to the gates of the Eternal City, but upon the other side of the water; and yet everybody knows, thanks to Lord Macaulay, how *that* business came off. The worthy knight was as totally unprepared for the pluck and mettle exhibited by his antagonist, as was the Tuscan Prince in the famous case of "Cocles and Two Others." He had no notion of the Roman spirit of Independence which animated that wife of the Chartist tailor in Rag Street; any such thing was quite beyond Sir Toby's experience, nor is it indeed common among the female sex in England. The voter's wife

is unquestionably a more cringing and unprincipled person than the voter;—and “I’m sure we can’t afford to displease our landlord,” is an argument almost always assisted by the silvery voice of women. They have indeed but very little regard for political conscience at all, nor even for political opinion, although to be sure there is a certain vague preference for “the gentlemanly interest,” which pervades all ranks of them. We tremble to think of what nearly every woman of the middle classes—bar-risters’ wives, rectors’ wives, merchant-princes’ wives (more than any)—will willingly do to oblige a titled person. Who has not seen them treat with scorn affectionate husbands—become ashamed of their own mothers—snub at their own dinner-table their dearest and oldest friends—talk mincingly upon fashionable matters which they are unacquainted with, and ignore good comfortable habits which have been theirs their whole lives long—in order, as they think, to gratify by all that sacrifice some strange nobleman, whom they will never see again, and who will forget their very names by the next week: nor, unfortunately, are these silly women naturally base or foolish, but such as are in other respects virtuous, kind hearted, and as they themselves fully believe, eminently Christian folk. A lady, with whom we were once weak enough to remonstrate upon her extravagant flattery and adulation of a certain elevated but most unworthy object, remarked that, “If we read our Bible a little oftener, *we* should act in a similar manner;” whereupon we promised to study it more frequently upon the condition of her learning by heart the first half of the second

chapter of St. James. A sensible friend of ours, with a wife and grown-up family, has pasted some of the remarks of that Apostle upon the first leaf of his "Peerage and Baronetage," with, we understand, the best results; his eldest daughter alone refuses to read any such insult to the landed aristocracy of her native land. Oh, middle class ladies of England! well would it be if these evils which you thus inflict were limited to your guests, your husbands, and yourselves; and that nepotism, jobbing, favouritism, did not spring up on every hand, because of you, with such plentiful crop of failure; how distressed you would be if you did but know this truth, that neither old-women-generals, nor old-women-statesmen, are to be blamed for Crimean disaster\* one half so much as the real women of England, who are never old—yourselves. We do most seriously wish that you were more like Mrs. Groves. That lady, indeed, received Sir Toby Ruffles with a certain snappishness which we should be sorry to see you imitate, but it was not exhibited towards the little girl Maria Keggs (late at one-and-sixpence a-week at Mr. Birt's), then present, who had called in Rag Street to see her "dear darling baby," whom she had been acquainted with just four days. "Take care of the poor, and the rich will take care of themselves," was Mrs. G.'s own proverb, and a far better than that similar one connected with our pecuniary interests; nevertheless, she was certainly not justified in addressing the knight before he had opened his mouth (and in her own house too!) in

\* This book was first published in 1859.

this fashion :—"Now, if you're coming here to persuade me to give up this child, and take to one of your young swells instead, you may save your breath to cool your 'tatoes; I sha'n't—so there." She well knew, poor woman, what he was come about, and that his offer would be a very advantageous one for her own family, so felt it necessary to fortify her resolution at once by the strongest expressions. Her republican spirit had been completely roused, too, by the way in which Mr. Hollis had spoken to her upon the subject previously; and it was in reference to that former interview, we suppose, that she suddenly, and with great asperity, brought her speech to a conclusion with, "We mayn't be duchesses, perhaps, you may tell him, but we're not cows."

"Except that cows are sweet, and have remarkably fine eyes, my dear Mrs. Groves," said the wily doctor, "I certainly see no resemblance. The fact is, that our little friend here being so healthy and likely to do well, and Mrs. Hollis's infant being evidently delicate, we thought that the proposed change might be quite safely made. In a matter of conscience, of course we do not consider profit; but I am sure that I may say, on the part of Mr. Hollis, that you are at liberty to name your own terms, and whatever they may be they will be acceded to."

The heart of the tailor's wife by nature leant to the side of strictest virtue; but a number of motives, which were not unnatural either, were hard at work to pull it in the other direction;—six children, all of tender years, had a heart-string each, and were applying to it a force more



powerful by far than lever or pulley. Scantily clothed, scantily fed they were at present, nor was there any provision for the future to be expected for any one of them from Church, or State, or Horse Guards: the politics of their father were decidedly anti-ministerial, and even should these be changed, the family influence would still be far from overwhelming. Her eye wandered over the little apartment for reasons to justify a change of purpose, and the drugget-less floor, the window stuffed with rags, the pinched-up fire-place, with its inadequate cinders, would perhaps have afforded them in sufficient strength and plenty, had not her gaze lit suddenly upon the rickety cradle, wherein her last born had pined away his little span of life; then Mrs. Groves answered rather tremulously,—

“Sir, it is of no use indeed; I took this child from its dead mother’s breast, and promised to fill her place here as well as I could; for all I know she may be cherishing my own poor boy at this moment up in Heaven.”

Sir Toby maintained an impressive silence for a little, as though overcome by sympathy, during which period he was devising new stratagems to effect his end. His extreme desire to obtain this foster-mother for young Hollis may seem strange, seeing that wet-nurses obey general laws, and are always in a supply at least equal to the demand for them; but the fact was, he was positively afraid of the young gentleman’s father, whose principal characteristic was one which, in the case of rich and powerful people, is called “an indomitable will,” and

which, when it occurs among the vulgar, is called "pig-headedness." He did not possess much geniality, and far less that exquisite sympathy which is by some considered indispensable to friendship; but his enmity at least was very lasting, and very lightly earned. Sir Toby had already crossed him in the matter now on hand, and felt it necessary that the breach should be repaired as soon as possible.

"If that is your only objection, Mrs. Groves," resumed the doctor, "and a very valid one, and one most creditable to yourself it is, I think that I can at once remove it, and even show, that for that 'little stranger's' sake" (he was quoting from the pin-cushions so familiar to his professional eye) "you should accede to my proposal. Mrs. Hollis is quite prepared to do her very best for little Birt, and especially desires that he may be brought up under her own roof: now there is no knowing what future advancement such a position may not procure for him. I knew a boy once who married his master's daughter under these very circumstances, and afterwards became a lord." The worthy knight was indebted to Mr. Hogarth's *Industrious Apprentice* for this personal reminiscence, but it had its full effect upon the impressionable tailor's wife.

"Well, Sir, I'll see about it and let you know. Would there be any objection now to this little girl's coming along with me? because the child is used to her like, and I could then be sure of his being in good hands, at all events."

Sir Toby looked at the small angular being of 'hir-

teen years' old or so with great benignity, and after a passing guess at the feelings of Mr. Hollis upon finding such an apparition haunting his house for months, and perhaps for years, replied, "Oh dear no, certainly not ; it is the very arrangement indeed which we had intended to propose, ourselves."





## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY.

**U**PON the very next day the Chartist tailor's wife and Miss Maria Keggs, her assistant, were installed in Bulbul Square. A gorgeous apartment on the third floor, about the size of the entire Rag Street mansion, was solely delivered up to them, and therein they held their state, in contempt of the whole army of the Hollis dependants, their sworn foes; their position was precisely that of Charles the Twelfth at Bender, during his honourable captivity in the Turkish empire. For certain politic reasons entertained by the higher powers, they were tolerated and upheld, but the obedience that was paid to them was tardy and compulsory enough.—“A low woman, and a dirty drab of a girl ringing bells, and ordering vittels—hoity toity,” observed the cook. “There she goes again for milk for young coachey, I'll be bound,” exclaimed the young person, whose mission it was to answer the nursery summons, and she shook her cherry-coloured ribbons more than

once with an emphatic "Drat their imperance !" before she toiled up stairs.

This sort of conduct was perhaps more excusable in Lucy than in cook, inasmuch as the former had set her cap, with the aforesaid ribbons in it, at John Birt without effect, before and even during the time wherein he was plighted to his deceased wife ; but it was without any excuse in the master of the house, who had perhaps given the cue to his domestics, by expressing his opinion that the best possible thing that could be done with the cub, was for its father to enter it in a Burial Club, and to get the money immediately. "A remark, my dear Sir," observed Sir Toby Ruffles, "in which I cordially coincide, but which I think injudicious, expressed as it was in the nurse's hearing, who has the fanatic attachments of her class."

Indeed, if he had seen the kindled eyes and pallid lips of poor impulsive Mrs. Groves, and noticed how she clung to the child yet in her arms, when she reached her *sanctum*, after listening to these same words, they would have seemed to him not only injudicious, but dangerous. She had undertaken her new position contrary to the dictates of her conscience, and contrary to the wishes of her Chartist husband ; and besides, as it has been already hinted, when provoked, she was for the time implacable. It was certainly very dangerous. The great doctor brought the little lord *in posse* with his own hands into the nursery ; a red baby shot with yellow, as babies are apt to be in their first week, and little to be distinguished in that respect from his poorer brother of the Mews.

"You may let this tape continue for a few days round his arm, Mrs. Groves, to prevent mistake," said Sir Toby, "although indeed he has the Hollis nose, without much doubt, and the chin also." The little infant seemed to smile (unless it was the wind) upon his new mother, and she on her part, woman-like, received him gladly into her arms, while the democratic youth at once took to his bottle as naturally as though he were a grown-up mechanic. Except for some unavoidable yearnings for a mother's privilege, a sense of departed comfort, and of a premature, and even cruel loss perhaps, in the lady of the house, the new order of things was thus established pleasantly enough in Bulbul Square.

"We are all of us born princes," says the keenest-eyed of English poetesses, and Master Birt was no exception to the rule; he kicked against pins and confinement, and squeaked as resolutely for his food when in the humour as any little duke in his own right; nor was he envious in the least degree of the young gentleman in fine linen and Brussels lace, in concert with whom he executed shrill duets and *pas de deux* upon nothing. His existence could be scarcely a newer thing to him than that of Miss Maria Keggs was now to her. The great swing-glass which adorned the nursery was as a magic mirror to this maiden from "Sweater's Rents," and all things reflected in it partook more or less in her eyes of the nature of enchantment; the polished wardrobes seemed to her to form very tolerable dwelling-houses of themselves; the gigantic beds to have been built for the purpose of being let out to some very superior class of lodger, in lots of

half-a-dozen sleepers at a time ; the marble wash-hand-stand, the fringed towels, which, instead of revolving upon cylinders and being used indifferently by all the family for weeks, were allotted in countless numbers to each person, and were continually being renewed upon their mahogany trees—at all these things Miss Maria Keggs was never weary of gazing, and the more particularly while she had the infant Birt upon her knees, and was rolling him up in his swaddling-clothes after the manner of making a snow man ;—long after he was finished, and should have been pinned, and when he could grow no stouter for rolling, linen and flannel being alike exhausted, he still went on revolving slowly, his young nurse's thoughts being entirely taken up with the astounding character of the furniture, and it required the "Now, Keggs !" of Mrs. Groves in her sharpest tone, to bring her from the realms of fancy down to pins. The Chartist lady, on the contrary, as became her, behaved amidst all this magnificence like an ancient stoic ; she trod upon the pride of Plato with a greater pride : when Maria began to praise anything (and she did praise everything, from the curtains to the coal-scuttle, and all by the same epithet of "Bootiful"), she would reply that it was "pretty well," in a tone that would have led a stranger to imagine that it was nothing to what was to be seen every day at her own private residence. Once when her little companion extolled the carpet, she put a stop to further eulogy by stating, that it would have been more admirable if it had not been made out of the sweat and blood of the people : this was a current phrase of

Mr. Groves', and his wife was used to it, but nothing could exceed the horror with which poor Maria regarded the unconscious Kidderminster after hearing that statement; she looked upon its crimson spots with all the belief of a Papist in the bottle of the blood of St. Januarius. Mrs. Groves had reason enough for wrath against her present patron, and there was scarcely any need, one would have thought, for a lady of her temperament to have so rigorously nursed it! To the young aristocrat, however, she was kind and even affectionate; and when on the fourth day she took her charge for the first time into his mother's room, Mrs. Hollis thanked her so gratefully as to bring tears into her eyes.

"You were with my poor dear Sarah when she died, I think, nurse?"

"I was, Ma'am; and she went off very comfortable," was the reply.

"Did you hear her last message to me?—the exact words, I mean: for what Sir Toby Ruffles remembered of it seemed very strange."

"No, Ma'am, I did not; but the other doctor was by; he'd tell you, bless you, for he never forgets nothing—Mr. Field."

Mrs. Hollis did not answer; she thought that it would not be pleasing to Sir Toby that another medical man should be introduced into the house without his knowledge. "It's a beautiful baby, too," said she presently, complimenting Birt junior at second hand, and after a glowing eulogium upon her own infant; "but it doesn't seem to take so much notice as mine, I think."



Whatever may have been wanting in that respect in the baby was more than compensated for by its little nurse, Maria, whom an apparatus for turning on hot and cold water in the bed-room, — the like of which had never before been seen by her save in the gin palace at the corner of Sweater's Rents, whither she had been often sent for quarterns by her lady mother,—was petrifying with admiration.

"I think," pursued Mrs. Hollis, thoughtfully, "that it would be but right for me to be his godmother."

"Be his *what*?" observed a voice from behind the curtains; "what was that you were observing, my dear, as I opened the door?"

"Nothing, Henry; I only thought that the two children might be christened together, and that there would be no harm in my standing."

"There would be the greatest harm, Mrs. Hollis," replied the husband, in a tone which implied that standing godmother was an athletic feat of the most dangerous character; "you are already fatigued with                      Now I tell you what, nurse," cried the speaker, interrupting himself upon catching sight of the boy with the cheap lace and cotton cap, "if you ever bring that brat down here again to worry your mistress, you may take my word for it I'll throw it out of window; his mother made mischief enough before him, a canting, sneaking                      "

"She is buried to-day, Sir," interposed Mrs. Groves, with great distinctness; "they are now about putting her into her grave." Mr. Hollis muttered something to him-

self which sounded like "how should I know?" Miss Maria Keggs turned pale under the fear of an immediate spiritual manifestation ; and the tears rolled silently down the young wife's cheeks. "Thanks to you, Ma'am, then all the same," resumed the nurse, breaking an uncomfortable silence ; "I will look out for some one else, or be godmother myself if need be, though quite unworthy, to this little orphan child. Go on, Maria." With which she motioned the girl out of the door, and bringing up the rear herself, retreated as if to a tune of triumph, although leaving the enemy in the possession of the field. She had been gone from the room more than a minute before Mr. Hollis began to speak again, and then his tones had all that doggedness which does duty in a brutal man for shame.

"The fact is, the children can't be christened together ; it is quite out of the question, and I was coming up here to tell you how it was all to be. My cousin the bishop writes that he will be in town in three weeks' time, and be happy to do the thing at home ; the child is delicate I told him, and he understood what I wished at once ; so we shall be all comfortable in the drawing-room, and you need not expose yourself to the cold by going to church : the churches are the very deuce for draughts and damp. I suppose my brother had better be asked to stand, if Madame, his French friend, will permit him ;—and now about the godmothers?"

"Why, there will be only one, you know, Henry,—our child being a boy,—and two godfathers."

"That's what I said, if you'll do me the favour to

listen, Mrs. Hollis. Now, said I, about the godmother ; and the other godfather too I meant, of course."

"Well, Henry, if you don't object, I should like to ask Mary Lilton ; she is my oldest friend, and in case of anything happening to me,—to us,—I know of nobody who would watch over our child so well."

"I do object, Madam, and that very strongly," replied the other sharply. "I wish I could get you to remember your present position a little oftener, and not so continually to let yourself down after things that you have dropped for ever : you will be pleased to select some one for this office who will brighten, and not tarnish by association, the rank of the heir presumptive of a peerage."

The utterance of this splendid passage seemed to shed over the speaker a sort of virtuous glow ; he began to persuade himself that there must surely have been a moral spring in his opinions somewhere to have inspired him with so much eloquence, and he felt an inclination, hard to be resisted, to tuck his coat-tails under his arm and to go on for ever. "What possible benefit upon my son, Madam, do you suppose a Manchester godmother can confer? Does *he* want an electro-plate mug presented to him, or a spoon made of some excellent substitute for silver? Would hers be the society in which he would move in after life? No, Madam ; the house of Hollis will henceforward keep to its own proper sphere. What interest could this Miss Milton—well, Lilton ; it's all the same—exert for one of his condition? What money could she leave him after her demise? None, none to speak of, none at least that could atone for the degrada-

tion. I am sorry to see you weep, Madam ; but I have a duty to perform as a member of an exalted race, and —ahem— as a father, Madam ; as you must be well aware, Manchester people are almost without exception Unitarians, and for all I know this Miss Milton may be actually—no, I don't say openly, Mrs. Hollis—if you will permit me to speak—I say in her *heart*” (and Mr. Hollis indicated by his forefinger the position of the vacuum which that organ ought to have occupied in his own case) “may be actually an enemy to that church which has braved a thousand years—or rather—well, it is of no consequence—that church of which we are both members. What do you say now to Lady Evergreen? . . . Insult you, Madam ! who wants to insult you ? I only proposed it for a joke, although that is the most ridiculous jealousy that ever woman took into her fanciful head. Now, choose one yourself then ; it shall never be said that I crossed you, Mrs. Hollis, on a subject of this kind.—My sister ? Why, you must be mad, Madam ; are you aware that even that miserable fifteen thousand pounds of hers is only left to her for life ? But that reminds me ; now there is her friend, Lady Beebonnet ; what possible objection, for I dare say there is one, can you have to *her* ? An Irvingite ? What of that ? A person of her talents and position may be permitted, I suppose, to have peculiar views ! It's one of the finest cathedrals you ever saw in your life ; they're all Church of England people in reality, only rather High-church. Don't be illiberal, Madam ; charity, Mrs. Hollis—do you remember what the Bible says about charity, where it

begins, and all about it. Yes, it shall be Lady Bee-bonnet; and mind you, if you say two words more I'll have the child taken to Gordon Square to be baptised."

"I feel very weak and ill, very, Mr. Hollis. I cannot argue with you even if I wished to do so, which I do not. ("I should hope not," interrupted her lord and master.) "Choose anybody you please, Sir, I shall be content; if I am taken away, I trust there will be still One to watch over him far better than any earthly godfather."

"Quite so, my dear," replied the husband; "that's been just my view of the matter all along; and I'm thinking of Charley Lester, a Melton Mowbray man, for the other fellow; he has only cousins whom he hates, and all his property is at his own disposal—five thousand a-year in land if he has a penny; he's got a devilish good life, to be sure—strong as a horse; but then life's always uncertain to a man who rides steeple-chases. There, now, we've arranged that matter very nicely. Good-bye, my dear, for the present, and try and get to sleep."

So thus Mr. Hollis settled the vexed question of sponsors, remarking to himself, as he lit a cigar in his smoking-room, that for domestic happiness there was certainly nothing like taking one's wife into one's confidence.



## CHAPTER V

### VOLNEY GROVES.

**T**HE preparations for, and talk about, the coming christening reminded Robert Birt of the nameless situation of his own infant. It was clear that the boy could not go through life as he had begun it; as his "little kid," or even as "Young Coachey." It appeared that sponsors were requisite in order to make the matter legal; and, of course, it was as well that these should be as respectable as possible,—householders, or, at least, people with a floor to themselves. The landlord of the "Dog and Duck" was an influential man, and had permitted him to run up a pretty long score without remonstrance. It would certainly be a complimentary thing to make that gentleman a godfather, and a sort of acknowledgment as well. Master and man—Mr. Hollis and Birt—had very similar notions of sponsorship, and both found a little difficulty in getting the three offices filled to their satisfaction; neither butler nor footman were to be thought of by the latter parent, for they had

both joined the Cook and Lucy faction for obvious reasons, and contemned the nursery; the female domestics too were swayed by this great cabal, and Mr. Birt's acquaintance with the softer sex, beside these, was limited.

Mrs. Groves' offer to stand "for want of a better" was, therefore, eagerly accepted; and not only that, but he interrogated her as to whether a bottle of gin or so might induce her better half to be answerable for the little one at the baptismal font: he had not the luck of knowing Mr. G., he said, by which means he hoped it would not be thought a liberty.

"Not by any means," answered the lady; "but the gin had better be out of the question, as John is, thank Heaven, a teetotaller. Howsomever, I doubt of his undertaking the job kindly, because he is of a different religion like."

"Not a Hatheist, I 'ope," quoth the coachman, in orthodox alarm.

"Sure, I can't say," replied the tailor's wife, with some indifference; "but an old beggar-man, who lodged with us at one time, and knew a deal of these matters, told me he thought he was a bit of a Calvin. But my husband is as good a man as lives, whatever that may be, you may rely on't."

"Then," said the coachman, with simplicity, "I am sure he will stand for my poor little motherless boy."

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not," replied the less sanguine lady. "You will find him at twelve o'clock at his

dinner, and you had better go then and speak to him yourself."

It seems strange that the exquisite manners and customs of Bulbul Square should never have penetrated into Rag Street, which lay within twenty yards of it—nay, that they should not even have so much as found their way down to the kitchen and servants' hall from the first and dining-room floors. But so it was; without even the *avant courier* of a visiting-card did Mr. Birt, coachman, invade the privacy of Mr. Groves, tailor, and choose for the period of his incursion, of all times in the world,—the dinner hour.

A short, thin, wiry-looking old man was Volney Groves; unnecessarily short, worn thin, prematurely old, but, luckily for him, as we have said, wiry. The task of providing with fifteen shillings a week, which never increased, for a family which was continually increasing, was written upon his face; the autograph of care was set upon his stony brow as plainly as words upon a tombstone; and the short gray hair grew over it all sorts of ways, like withering grasses. To him, life had been a sort of perpetual treadmill—a tramp, tramp, tramp, every day and all day long, upon steps that led (almost certainly) to nothing—by no means the rounds of a ladder such as *we* climb, my respectable classes, every step of which brings us nearer to something that we covet. Rent, firing, clothes, food for eight persons, to be procured with but fifteen shillings a week!—one hundredth part, at the very most, of the weekly income of the poorest dwellers in Bulbul Square, with whom times, they say, never were so bad; and what



with the knavery of Irish tenants and the depreciation of railway stock, whose daughters are almost reduced to wear winter bouquets of azalias instead of camellias ! But even the fifteen shillings are not to be relied upon ; for disease, which rarely visits the square unless in some graceful form of “indisposition” or “nerves,” abides in Rag Street under many a terrible *alias*. We must subtract, then, the subscription to a medical club. Death, too (can we say unhappily ?), comes far oftener to these *pauperum tabernæ* ; and the funeral rites, however humble, must be paid, and paid for. We must subtract the money for the burial society as well. Volney Groves had seen three little deal coffins borne away from under his roof ; nay, from the very room where the living parents, and brothers, and sisters, took their earthly rest. He had been himself struck down at different times by cholera, by fever, by ague ; and, while he lay powerless in his bed, he had seen his children lacking food.

Oh, ye mighty spirits, dead or alive, to whom, it seems, by your own account, Genius has worked such bitter wrongs,—you, consumed by your high passions, frenzied with publishers, drunk with the god,—and you, Religionists, hair-splitting, sleek doubters, who are torn and convulsed in your inmost souls by a word more or less in a creed,—your wrongs, your sorrows, your doubts, are just as nothing, believe us, to the troubles of such men as Volney Groves,—less than nothing, and vanity, be sure, in the sight of your common Father.

There are very few things worse in the world than going without one’s own dinner against one’s will (al-

though there is a certain sickly but pleasant sentimentalism in doing so voluntarily); there are none so bad as seeing those we love in want of theirs. We cannot say we think it unnatural—however reprehensible and faulty—that a certain feeling of irritation should exist in the ill-fed against the pampered; that Mr. Groves, in short, in company with his six children, over their very little bacon and their great deal of greens, should be disinclined to welcome an uninvited guest in the Hollis livery, and that to Mr. Birt's "Good-mornin'," he only replied "Mornin'," like a sulky echo.

"I am the man," said John Birt, touching a piece of crape which he wore upon his arm, "whose dead wife your missus was so kind to, and whose baby she took up with afterwards."

"Ah," said the other, a little softened, "will you sit down?"

"No; I can say what I have to say at once, thank ye; and particular as you are at dinner. I want you to stand godfather to the little 'un, if you would be so good."

"Godfather! well, you won't beat that, Coachey, if you try ever so. What, go to *church*!" (This word, given in several syllables, and with an emphasis such as it was wont to have on Sundays in Hyde Park, a year or so ago.) "No, not if I knows it."

"I am sorry," said Birt, reddening; "I meant no offence, I'm sure."

"None is given, Master Coachman, where none is intended; but, you see, the parsons and I differ; that's where it is."

"Well, if that be all, I should think you might just help a fellow at a pinch, too ; it wouldn't take you twenty minutes."

"If it did not take me five, friend," replied Volney, "I should say the same. You Christian folk may gammon one another just as you please, and look this way and walk that for everlasting, but you don't get Volney Groves to sign his name to nothing he don't go with, or even to stand by with his mouth shut and see it done. So, there !"

"Sorry I troubled you," said Birt, deeply offended, "but it was your missus as sent me ; and I did think as how all your children had got names."

Having delivered himself of which sarcasm, John Birt went home again to report no progress to Mrs. Groves in the nursery.

"Well," said that lady, at the close of his narration of the preceding interview ; "you must be father and god-father too, that's all."

John shook his head. It seemed to him that there was, or ought to be, something in the Tables of Affinity, at the end of the Prayer-Book, against such a proceeding as that.

"I should prefer to have it all correct," said he ; "the christening comes off on Wednesday, and I've given notice to the clerk. Don't you think, nurse," added he, tenderly, "that this little one Maria looks to is getting something like        like her as is gone to Heaven ?"

"Stay," said Mrs. Groves hurriedly, and without replying to his question, "I think I know who'll do it. Here,

keep your eye on the noble lord, Keggs, for half an hour or so, will you? He's just had his dinner, and will sleep like anythink for ever so long. There's the shawl on; now for the bonnet." And, without even bestowing a single glance upon the swing-glass, Mrs. Groves was out of the room in an instant; and, for all the hurry and bustle and extra clothing which she had put herself in, the face of Mrs. Groves, as she tottered down stairs, was as white as a sheet.

On the next Wednesday morning there was a select gathering in the drawing-room of the house in Bulbul Square, of whom the host and hostess, Mrs. Groves, and Master Adolphus Henry Plantagenet Brooks Hollis (that is to be) are already known to us. [There was more money yet where the hundred thousand pounds had come from, and hence that disgraceful epithet in the fourth place.] Besides these, there was the Right Honourable George Lord Rexham, one of his Majesty's Privy Counsellors; a little puffy as to his face, and a little watery as to his eyes, but, otherwise, and particularly when viewed from behind, a slim, graceful young fellow, not above five-and-forty, surely! He had some golden guineas in his hand for the nurse's fee, and, although far from being ostentatious, he let everybody into the secret of his generosity, they jingled so in those poor shaking fingers.

Sir Charles Lester was, it must be confessed, the more sponsorial-looking person of the two: he had really very much the air of a man going through a religious exercise; solemn, serene, unruffled, with eyes apparently fixed upon some invisible object. This was, however, unfortunately

his habitual expression—the “stony British stare” with which he transacted business at Goodwood, and with which he also waltzed at the Casino. He renounced the devil and all his works with the same imperturbable calmness with which he would have cut a snob in society, and as though he had really never known anything about the fellow.

Lady Beebonnet was small and slight and beautiful—nay, rich and witty also; but she would not have been thought quite so witty, perhaps, if she had not been quite so rich. She had gone through many phases of what she took for faith, and had written and privately published a book called “Trials of the Soul.” She had spent much money upon more than one religious edifice, but not till they were fully completed and fit for all practical needs; her grand idea was that of decoration: through paint, gold leaf, velvet, and artificial darkness, people were led up best, she thought, to Nature’s God; she loved a dim religious light to fall upon her through some exceedingly highly-coloured saint in an east window, and appreciated him all the more if he was misproportioned, angular, and very much out of perspective; she would have gone without luncheon every Friday for months, but that the Rev. Cruciform Pyx assured her that where delicacy of constitution existed, the Church always granted its dispensation: presently the performance of the Service in English became too great a trial to her spirit of mystic reverence (although, to do him justice, by muttering, intoning, and turning his back upon the congregation, Mr. Pyx did his best to make it unintelligible); so she had recently taken

up with Irvingism, angels, and unknown tongues. The kind-hearted little lady never dreamt of any of these things interfering with her social relations, nor would she indeed have been willingly absent from any religious ceremony whatever, upon any account, and especially upon one such as this, which had a live bishop to conduct it.

“I will come and be sponsor to your dear little darling with pleasure, my dear Mrs. Hollis,” she wrote, “for I believe in your Thirty-nine Articles, and in a great deal more, I hope, besides.” And she had really read them once, word by word, aloud, on the morning of the day that she had been confirmed.

The Bishop of Plumbun enjoyed the reputation of having the sweetest voice and the most graceful action of any prelate on the bench; the way which he had of laying on his hands, and of blessing a congregation, was such as had been known many times to draw tears. He was an eminent Greek scholar, and had edited, with voluminous notes, more than one volume, which had it been written in the vulgar tongue, must have gone to Holywell Street for a publisher, and would have subjected the author to a prosecution from the Society for the Suppression of Vice: he had also been private tutor to the then prime minister of England, and to several other noblemen in their youth, so was by no means without a claim to the Episcopate; still he had not expected his elevation so soon as it occurred. When the Plumbun see fell vacant, the first intimation of his new dignity was conveyed to him by one of the Hollises, who signed himself his “affectionate cousin,” and it was the first

time that connexion had even been so much as acknowledged: it would ill have befitted his high office, perhaps, to have remarked upon this coincidence, and certainly his lordship never seemed to have been struck with it at all: and yet he could reprove too, when occasion was, and that with a refinement of manner and French polish of expression which gave buds to the rod, knots to the episcopal scourge; it was he who replied to the young curate, coming anticipative of rebuke, to express his sorrow for much fox-hunting, "a practice of mine which I hear your lordship objects to," in this fashion: "Nay, Sir, you have been misinformed. I never objected to your fox-hunting; I object to your doing *anything else!*"

At ordinations, consecrations, confirmations, &c. &c. (over the luncheons which accompany those ceremonies as surely as the sparks fly upward,) there was always a new retort of his lordship to be discussed and admired by the company, for he had attained so high a character of wit that all the good things said in the diocese were ascribed to him, just as in cases of pecuniary wealth we see that not only does the millionaire retain his own, but generally contrives to suck up the little property of a great number of other people also.

Once only it is on record that our bishop caught a tartar in the person of a certain rector—the see of Plum-bun was celebrated for the class — much addicted to riding after hounds. A very different person was this to the curate above spoken of; a man with a preferment of fifteen hundred a year, and "own brother" (an expres-

sion he borrowed from his favourite volume, "Ruff's Guide to the Turf") to the squire of his parish. His lordship therefore rode over to the rectory, unaccompanied by even an examining chaplain or a groom, and dropped in upon Mr. Chifney, one morning, quite in a friendly way. "Speaking as one man to another," said he, "and not as your bishop, I give you my frank opinion that there is no real harm in fox-hunting whatever; rather the reverse; still, my friend, there are weaker brethren, and this habit of yours is a stumbling-block to them, I do assure you. You see it is not as if you were a mere road rider, Mr. Chifney (when hunting may be considered accidental,) but I hear that you go, so to speak, slap across the country."

The rector smiled and bowed. "Certainly," thought the dexterous prelate, "I have gilded the pill most admirably."

"My lord," was the reply, "I thank you. Speaking as one man to another, and not to my spiritual superior (since you are kind enough to put it on that ground), I assure you that I find no fault with ball-going; rather the reverse; but there are weaker brethren. Now your attendance at the duchess's in London the other night, I have heard commented upon by many, and always with reprobation."

"Pardon me," interrupted the bishop, "I was in her grace's house, but not at her ball; my—ah—my position necessitates a certain acquiescence in the innocent amusements of our aristocracy while in London, but not in the polka; far from it; no, Mr. Chifney, no, I



assure you I was never within three rooms of the dancers."

"Nay, my lord," replied the reverend sportsman, with a laugh, "but that is just my case; for though I never miss a day, when I can help it, in riding to hounds, and take my line, as you were good enough to observe, as straight as most men, yet weighing, saddle and all, near twenty stone, I have not been these ten years within three fields of the fox."

Whatever effect this answer may have had upon the Bishop of Plumbun, at the time it was made, it had worn off to all appearance before we met him at the christening in Bulbul Square. A divine more satisfied with all the world, himself included, and more amiably unconscious of the failings of others, was never beheld. He took up the child to christen it in a manner that made Lady Beebonnet clasp her hands; while he set poor Lord Rexham (who had a fixed idea that he ought to be continually repeating the Doxology) right in the responses, with all the grace and naturalness possible.

And thus Master Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis had his Christianity answered for.

That very afternoon was one of the times set apart by Mr. Poppy for the same public rite to be administered in his church—"the deuce for draughts and damp," as Mr. Hollis had termed it, but still very much colder outside than inside. Poor folks are always a good deal before their time, and there was a fair sprinkling of mothers and children on the stone steps before the gate was opened; for Mr. Poppy, well perceiving that religion was reserved

almost exclusively for the seventh day amongst his flock, saw no sufficient reason why the place of worship should be oftener accessible. After a while came the broad-shouldered beadle pushing rudely this way and that, then the clerk with the keys, and after a longer interval, the officiating minister, well warmed with elderberry wine. The stupid mothers and the stupid sponsors were marshalled not very gently into their proper places, and the half-dozen infants were bracketed together and christened off with as few mistakes as might be : in the register, beside Rachael Groves and Nicholas Pewter, landlord of the "Dog and Duck," we find the name of the third who stood godfather to Robert Birt was, James Field, Surgeon.

This gentleman, unknown, as we have seen, to Sir Toby Ruffles, had begun to be generally recognised by the profession too. This skilful operation and that successful treatment of his, had one after another gone forth from the doors of St. Ermengarde's with ever-increasing circles of good report ; that large white hand, so firm, so delicate of touch, had earned him a deserved reputation as one of the first manipulators of the hospital, but it had not learnt the art above all arts, of dipping into wealthy patients' pockets : his practice lay among Sweater's Rents, Rag Street, and the like ungolden localities, and was very far indeed from being remunerative ; his time was spent in receiving, for two hours daily, gratuitous patients at his own house, and in attending gratuitous patients after hospital hours in their homes. Homes ! filthy, stinking dens, over-crowded, incestuous, vermin-haunted,

kennels of the poor ! bed and board in the same room ; every prohibited degree, including a new one—that of the Lodger—herding promiscuously together ; light and air always wanting ; food insufficient ; drink, indeed, often in abundance, but always noxious and intoxicating.

These are the many domestic comforts that await half-a-million or so of our Christian brethren when their day's toil is done, for which, such is our complacency, we wonder that they are slow to leave the brilliant gin-shop always close to their doors : these are the places whither our thankful brother is to take his Bible (after attending three services of his church) and edify himself and family for the rest of the Sabbath day, unlustful for a sight of green fields, or for the hearing of music, or for the baking of his dinner (if he be so lucky as to have anything to bake), or for even a pot of beer.

Can any ignorance, or, if not ignorance, can any hypocrisy be so astounding as this of our would-be Sabbatical legislators ? Was any insult ever offered to a national poor so gross as it ? Suppose any one of these blind guides should own but one such den as we have been describing, and should receive rent for it, and instead of doing all that lay in his power to make it a human habitation, should rise in his place in parliament and denounce Sunday travelling and Sunday bands instead,—could the intense combination of knave and fool be possibly more complete than in such a person ? We know nothing whatsoever against Lord Camelswallower and his family, and we do not wish to know ; but let him and them be as virtuous and sober now, as may be, and

we will stake our existence, should they remove to Sweater's Rents (not a hundred yards from their present residence) for but one year, that that noble Protestant would get more drunk on Sunday than on any other day in the week ; that his wife would get as drunk as he, and that his children, one and all, would have curses in their mouths as surely as they would have vermin in their hair. His lordship's opinions on the Sabbath question and others would then be expressed thus, we believe, in his character of a London day-labourer :—

“We want fresh air and cleanliness and decency ; if Christianity don't mean those things, we don't want *that* : we don't want any gammon about gentlemen and ladies being our brothers and sisters, for they look after their horses, aye and their game (or so at least my lodger, who comes from the country, says), far better than after us, and they know it ; they keep their brothers and sisters, upon the whole, in considerably worse places than they keep their pigs, and I am paying half-a-crown a week to a Christian dean and chapter for this particular sty. Let us understand one another, we two classes : the one has a good religion which it pretends to believe in, but which it never puts in practice, only appealing to the same when it is about to do something harsh ; now the other, our class, has no religion, good or bad. In morality, I suppose the two are about equal ; at all events, *we* have nothing of that sort ; how should we ? We are separate, distinct as light and darkness ; they go their way, we ours ; but if to their neglect they add insult, if they dare to curtail our miserable enjoyments by

hypocritical laws, we will break their windows, aye, and may be, could we but get at them, their heads, likewise."

Distinct as light and darkness we say again; but there is some twilight too: of their own blessed will some rays of twilight steal down into the gloom and gladden it; some well-to-do good men and some good women are found to leave their comfortable homes for poor men's styes; whom frightful sights and hideous smells have not the power to drive from doing good; who have Christ's love within them, in the place of "nerves;" whom neither blasphemies nor obscene talk can turn from doing God's work; who do not pick their dainty way through the world with uplifted skirts, fearing to touch their brethren in the streets (and alas! far more their sisters), as though sin was to be caught by contact like the itch, and never affected folks with clean kid gloves. There are some Christians, still, whose pity, instead of welling forth in tears, or letters to the *Times*, or social novels "with a purpose" even, leads them to visit the far worse than fatherless, the more wretched than widowed, and yet to keep themselves unspotted; glory to these on earth as it is in heaven, and shame on us! These are the saints whose halos we cannot see, the lords of men whom none of us salute, unless they happen to be heirs of something much more tangible than Heaven: it is not often that such a one as she who made her home in hospitals, and took her pleasure by the side of shattered men, is hailed a queen; on the contrary, we have a certain kind of commiseration in

general for folks who spend their time in doing good ; a medical man, for instance, with wits and money enough to live upon, who throws away his days on unremunerative patients, nor studies how to foster a single fashionable malady, may be well-meaning even to enthusiasm (poor fellow !), but between ourselves, reader, he is not quite the man to get on, eh ? A good man at first, has he been any way bettered by this course of action ? or, to drop a City phrase for plain English, beginning with some money, has he now made a good deal more ? The question cannot be satisfactorily answered.

Mr. Field, however, was far from being an unhappy man. Beside the pleasure which is said to be derived from the practice of benevolence, he had a delight in his profession such as perhaps is rarely found except among doctors ; his very goddess was Hygeia, and the lady of his affections, perhaps the Pharmacopœia herself ; but, nevertheless, when Mrs. Groves informed him of the motherless child that was in need of one to answer for him before the Great Physician, Mr. Field not only willingly gave up an hour or so's study, but took some thought beside, both then and afterwards, concerning his little god-child, Robert Birt.



## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE FOUNDATION.

**I**F it be not an unreasonable request, let ten years pass away ; ten mighty waves of time bear our two infants on to boyhood ; the epoch of frock and tunic, of importance enough, doubtless, in their own eyes, having but little interest in ours, and not being easy to paint ; when one or two events, apparently of but little moment, but which remain distinct to memory till their dying day, are all which *they* can recall of childhood, the filling-in and colouring of the picture of it by *us*, must needs, indeed, be fanciful and untrustworthy. If our great philosophic poet's experiences were as he describes them to have been during early youth, so were not those of Masters Birt and Hollis ; no trailing clouds of glory did they bring from their celestial home ; no Heaven, other than the material one of lollipops, lay about them in their infancy ; the glory and the dream, if they ever came over their souls at all, came afterwards—far later. The motherless, dependent child began to

know that there was something amiss about him, very, very soon. Why did that first plaintive cry of love, "Mamma! mamma!" receive no answer, which, in young Harry's case, was never uttered without some sweet return? Why, when Nurse Groves, in process of time, left Bulbul Square, her mission having been fulfilled, was Miss Maria Keggs the only soul, beside his father, in that great mansion, who ever kissed his childish lips, or talked in broken baby speech to please him? Why, when the nursery bell was rung below stairs, was it always for Master Harry to be brought down and exhibited to admiring friends, and never for him? Nothing, however, distressed him during this period so much, perhaps, as that, when they were periodically physicked, young Dives had jam to take his powders in, and he only sugar; those (in his happy ignorance) were occasions worse than that solemn day when even the inimical cook came up to pat his head, and Lucy to give him a little toy, and when his Maria burst into tears whenever she looked at him; the day when Mrs. Hollis herself folded him up in her arms at night, and sung him to sleep with the sorrowfulest song she knew; when his blue cotton dress was taken from him, and a little black frock given to him in the place of it, and he was told not to say "father" any more, because father was dead.

He was very sorry, too, when he came to understand that the bluff, smiling face which used to nestle down to his so tenderly, would not do so any more, but was laid underground for ever; and it was a bitterer sorrow yet, in after years, to have it told to him, right out, that his



father had been pitched from off his coach-box on to the street pavement, and had so perished, dead-drunk.

The worst of the accident was, said Mr. Hollis, that Saltfish was lamed for life in her off hind-leg, and that was expense enough to put him to, without having to maintain any longer the cub of the fellow who had caused the mischief; besides, the cub was five years old at that time, and even if not of an age to get his own living, at least to be at the parish workhouse, and thither he should go. Though Mrs. Hollis opposed this decree with all her weakness, and even the hostile domestics pronounced it "shameful," it would, without doubt, have been carried out, but for the intervention of Lady Beebonnet. She had been won over by a tale that would have moved most women, and it was narrated, we dare say, with all the eloquence of dewy eyes and fluttering voice.

"I have ventured to come to you," said poor Mrs. Hollis, "my dear Lady B——"

"Poll, if you please, my dear," interrupted her ladyship. "I am Mary among people of my own persuasion, Polly with my acquaintances, and Poll with my friends."

"Thank you, you are very kind; I trusted to this kindness when I determined to ask your help. You know the little boy who has been brought up with my own Harry, whose father has just met his death in so terrible a manner; I saw the doctor who brought the poor fellow home."

"How dreadful! You did not see the body, did you? Bless me! I think I should have expired, myself."

"No, dear, no; but the doctor, a Mr. Field, attended

the boy's mother also when she died, about five years ago. She was very dear to me, and I thought, as he was in the house, he might just tell me something which has always puzzled me about her; she sent me such a very strange message from her death-bed."

"Excuse me, darling, but I'm getting horribly frightened; if you'll allow me to keep my hand upon the bell I shall feel happier; there, I am not going to ring it, you know, but it's a comfort to know that one can at an instant's warning; now, then, what was it?"

"I was to take care of her motherless child for her sake, and for the sake of the mistletoe."

"Well, I call that very pretty, now; it will please my pet angel immensely; it is one of the symbols of the early Church, my love."

"Yes, but Mr. Field told me that her real words were, 'I ask it of her heart in memory of the myrtle bough.'"

"Well, my love, and I believe that's another symbol."

"Ah, but dear Lady Bee—— Poll, dearest, I mean (sobbing), you don't know what it meant."

"No, but any of the angels—but there, I forgot, you have no angels—I mean, I can easily get the information."

"No, my dear, it only referred to poor me; you see, when I was first engaged to Mr. Hollis, I was very young, and—and——"

"Well, you liked many other folks better, I suppose—of course you did; begging your amiable husband's pardon, it would be very wonderful if you did not; be-

sides, it isn't *ton* to marry anybody one is in love with. I did not do it myself, I assure you."

"I loved Frank Lilton, though ; oh ! (hysterically) I loved him very dearly all the time."

Lady Beebonnet did not whistle softly upon receiving this communication, as a man would perhaps have done ; she knelt beside her weeping sister, and kissed her bowed-down forehead tenderly instead.

"We were engaged to one another," sobbed the young wife, "before I ever saw my husband, and I could not stop my heart from loving him all at once. Mr. Hollis did not know this. When Frank came to say good-bye for ever, the day before he sailed for India, he broke off a sprig of myrtle when we were alone in the conservatory and gave it to me—(I have it still)—with one last kiss. It was evening, and there were lights in the place, and Mr. Hollis, who was smoking a cigar in the garden, saw all this. I know not what might have happened had it not been for Sarah—Sarah Thwaite as she was then—who, before I could speak for terror, confessed that it was she whom young Mr. Lilton had kissed, and to whom, because he was so old a friend, she had given the sprig of myrtle. She saved me (and, what was more, dear Frank,) at the expense of her own good name ; and since she has asked it of my heart, by token of that sacrifice, not to desert her boy, ought I to suffer him, as Mr. Hollis threatens, to be sent to the workhouse ?"

"The workhouse ?" screamed Lady Beebonnet ; "the late Sir Joseph B. should have cut *me* into mincemeat before I would have consented to such a thing. Come,

now, let me sit down and write a line to your one day to be Deeply-Regretted—you have no idea how pleasant it is to be a Relict!—but at present tender-hearted, generously-impulsive husband, which will bring him at least to a sense of decency. See here.

“‘DEAR SIR,’—(that will be the cold application which will make him shiver in the anticipation of the pretty things I am likely to circulate about his kindness to orphans)—‘Hearing that you are about to part with your young Harry’s playfellow, I beg that I may have the pleasure of offering that poor friendless boy a home in my own house, which, although humble in comparison with yours, will not, at least, be so great a change as that which it is generally understood you have in contemplation for him. I remain, yours, &c. &c.’ (which he will fill up with unpleasant adjectives enough, I’ll be bound,)

“‘LYDIA BEEBONNET.’”

“But, my dear friend, this is inflicting a tax upon you that I cannot possibly permit,” urged the grateful wife.

“Nay, don’t be alarmed, my love, it is only a tax upon paper,” replied the widow; “I have known the Hon. Henry Hollis much longer than you have, and I must say for him, that, after all, there is less of the bully about him than of the coward.”

Lady Beebonnet was right; the “indomitable will” bent easily enough before the fear of ridicule, and at ten years old young Robert’s address was still at Bulbul Square. He had never been used to anything but de-

pendence, but still its bread had never ceased to be bitter to him ; if he gave the least trouble, however unavoidably, to the domestics, they did not scruple to let him know their opinion of one as lowly born as themselves, heir to nobody, and inheritor of nothing ; if he angered the master ever so little, the child was not spared, nor was the rod of correction. Young Harry liked him, it is true, as much as a fickle boy could like his playmate, but it was before Mrs. Hollis alone that the child of her adoption poured forth all his wealth of love, and strove to pay back in love's very coinage his great debt of gratitude ; he thought for her, felt for her, worked for her, and, for her sake, would have laid down his young life cheerfully. And when he learnt that he was to go to school at her own private cost, by which expense he knew she would be deprived of many a pleasure, he manfully made up his mind to do his very best to get his own living as soon as possible, and show, by proof, that he was not unworthy of her care and sacrifice. He had Maria to bid good-bye to, tearfully, and Mr. Field (although his sentiments towards that gentleman were, perhaps, rather dutiful than affectionate), but, otherwise, he felt little regret at going to school, because, alas ! there was no such thing as home to be contrasted with it. For if ever that true saying, " 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," seem false, it is when we are torn for the first time away from parent, and sister, and brother, and all the intercourse of home affections, to be placed in a more hostile and more cruel world than that of men, without the armour of the man in which to battle against

it. Ah, hour, bitterest of all, save that wherein Death is beckoning! Ah, day, darkest of all days, that even now can cast a shadow over our spirit across these so many years!

For Robert Birt, as it seemed, school could have but few terrors; circumstances had taught him, as we have said, to regard it merely as a stepping-stone to independence, and he cared but little whether it should be rough or smooth;—he cared but little, that is, outside the coach which was carrying him through the clear frosty air at eleven miles or so an hour, to Senbury. Every feature of the country road was new to him, for he had been left in Bulbul Square whenever the family had gone to their country seat in Rookshire, and had never been out of town in all his life; the whole day's experience was like the commencement of a new existence, filling him with thoughts that shut out both the past and future; but when the long drive was at last ended, and he had arrived at the sombre cathedral town where he was to be left friendless for so many weeks, it was different. When the coach drew up before those iron-studded gates under the darksome archway by the porter's lodge, and his little portmanteau was taken out of the boot, and the hand-shaking with the kindly passengers on the hind-seat was done, and when the guard had said, "Good-bye, young gentleman," and the last flourish of his triumphant horn had died away, it was very different. The sturdy little heart (it was but ten years old!) could stay no longer in its place, but climbed up the poor boy's throat and nearly suffocated him.

"My dear, dear, dear Maria," he sobbed aloud, and the welcome tears came down in a grateful shower;—then "dear, good Mrs. Hollis," thought he, and he wiped his tears away with the back of his hand, and, standing upon tiptoe, rang the huge bell manfully. He had no notion of making such a noise as that which followed. "Bome, bome, bome," again and again it pealed forth, and then an echo took it up and repeated, "bome, bome," until it got quite sleepy over it and dropped it; but presently picked it up once more and murmured out "bome, bome," as its dying words. After a little there was a creaking of locks, and an undoing of bars, and the mighty gates drew back to left and right complainingly; thereupon a stately person, in rusty purple, became visible, who, ignoring the presence of Robert Birt, looked enquiringly up the street, and down the street, and over the way, as though for a carriage and six, with outriders. "Please, Sir," asked Robert Birt, "is this my school?" The purple person slowly concentrated both his eyes upon his small interrogator, and then, as if afraid of trusting himself to speak, retired under the archway, where he proceeded laboriously to close and fasten the great gates again. When this was fully accomplished, a little door in one of them was cautiously opened, and the purple person beckoned through it with his hand and drew in Robert and the portmanteau one after the other; then he growled, "Why, them 'ere gates haven't been opened since the gov'nors came last year, nor that 'ere bell been rung! My precious eyes!"

"I am very sorry, I am sure, to have given you so

much trouble," said the boy; "I didn't see the little bell."

But, "oh, my precious eyes, if you *haven't* done it," was all that the other deigned to say as he ushered the new arrival into the cloisters.

The collegiate school of Senbury was one of the oldest in England, and had had its chance with Eton and the rest of them, of becoming a nursery garden of the aristocracy, with its foundation boys made a secondary consideration, and the provisions of Gulielmus de Wynkyng (the benefactor) for its government very considerably set aside; but it had somehow missed its opportunity, and was now content to pride itself upon being kept pure from novelty, and faithful to its mediæval founder. Morning prayers were *matins*, evening prayers were *vespers*, the under-masters were *sub-wardens*, and even the purple person's wife was *janitrix*; the boys, always numbering thirty-four, were uniformly dressed in gray, had oatmeal cakes for tea and breakfast, shoulders of mutton for dinner every week-day, and legs of mutton every seventh day, prefacing each meal with a long Latin grace in praise of Gulielmus (whose memory was hateful to them). They were supposed to bring two shillings and fourpence with them—no more, no less—at the beginning of each half-year; and when they walked abroad (which, however, they were permitted to do but seldom), they had previously administered to them a form of oath, also in Latin, to the effect that they would not throw missiles or aim cross-bolts at the cathedral windows. The warden never entered the great school-room without a *salve*, or



left it without a *vale* impressively delivered; the sub-wardens stood up and drooped their heads at both those benedictions. The boys, who were of the nineteenth century, looked upon these matters, we are sorry to say, merely as well-paid-for bits of acting in the great collegiate drama or mystery of which they were compelled to be every-day spectators: indeed, for all the long Latin graces, and the longer vespers and matins, and the warden and the sub-wardens, and the prohibitory oaths, the gray-coats of Senbury were about as bad a lot of boys as Gulielmus de Wynkyng or his lady (who was an heiress and *fundatrix*) could have possibly conceived. The cost of their education was trifling enough, and, by consequence perhaps, the difficulty of admission considerable, so that the school was principally composed of the left-handed offspring of men of rank, and of the legitimate sons of stewards and private chaplains; these circumstances produced a good deal of delicate *badinage*, and endless set-to's among the young gentlemen.

Two gray-coats, as like as a couple of parched peas, met Robert Birt and his conductor on their way to the warden's.

"Are you a nob or a snob, young 'un? you look like a snob," asked one.

"Are you your father's son or your mother's, fooley?" enquired the other.

"I never saw my mother," said poor Robert, "in all my life."

"Ah, I knew he was a nob," cried No. 2; "a milky nob; here, take *that*."

"No, you sha'n't," said No. 1; "if you hit him again I'll lick you."

"Spell *able*," retorted the other, parenthetically; then to Robert, to the tune of a popular melody, "'Miss Lucy had a baby;'—was your mother's name Lucy, fooley?"

"No," replied Robert, reddening: "my mother's name was Sarah."

Exeunt No. 1 and No. 2 with shrieks of laughter into the play-ground, bearing news of the young arrival's excessive greenness.

The wardenry was a fine stone building occupying the entire side of a huge square court, blackened with soot, and peeled here and there by weather, and old as owls could wish; the room to which the boy was conducted was very handsome, panelled with oak, and hung with purple. Dionysius Tertle, D.D., was also very handsome, gorgeously attired in very superfine broadcloth, and richest silk; by the time which he took to make his appearance it might have been conjectured that that high-collared coat of his at least had replaced something less uncomfortable, and by the delicate odour still lingering about his vest and apron, a revolutionary mind would have detected that he had been smoking cigars. The almost episcopal smile which reigned over his features as he entered melted right away at the sight of his little visitor:—"Why, I thought

"Yes, Sir, of course you did; how could you be off of doing it," interrupted the purple person, "with the great bell set a ringing like that." Half-aside, and to

the unfortunate new comer, "You precious little varmint ! We took you for a governor."

"Oh, so *you* rang the great bell, did you?" said the doctor, solemnly, with a pause between each word; "you have come two days after the appointed time, Sir; Gulielmus de——. But stay, how old are you? Ten! Well, to-morrow you will write out the word 'Tintinnabulum, a little bell,' one thousand times, to impress the error upon your memory; you may now join your comrades in the play-ground, and mind, Sir, you do not litho-ballize."

"I'm not to do what, please?" asked little Robert of the porter, after he had been hurried out of the presence.

"Not to chuck stones," was the curt reply.

The nobs and snobs were eager to receive their new companion at the entrance of their play-ground, and even stopped a little playful snowballing, at which they were engaged, to bid him welcome. "Here he comes: hooray! how's Sarah?" resounded on every side. "But stop a bit," exclaimed a tall slim lad, the leader of one party, "we must decide whom you belong to; who was your governor?"

"He was only a coachman," responded Robert, simply.

Sixteen snowballs accurately delivered, and prostrating him, proclaimed the feeling of the aristocratic faction in regard to the new boy; seventeen others aimed at him, as he fell a good deal hurt, demonstrated the sentiments of the middle class to be in the same direction.

As Robert Birt lay upon the frosty pavement, bleeding,

—for many of the snowballs had sharp stones inside them, — a certain half-formed thought that had long been growing up in his young heart, came into flower (it was a very ugly one), and petrified there for ever. He got up, not without difficulty, and, tottering to where the tall slim lad, the biggest of the boys, was standing, said, “Please, Sir, do kill me at once, I don’t want to live.”

“Poor beggar !” said the young gentleman addressed ; “well, I do think it was rather a shame.”

“I don’t,” said the snob captain, positively ; “I think him a melodramatic little humbug ; you’ll want to die, mind you, more than you do now before I have done with you.”

Poor Robert ! We doubt, if even he could have listened to them, whether the six hired cherubim in dirty white smocks who chanted that night in chapel could have given him any comfort ; nor even the doctor’s sonorous voice from out his carved stall, condescending to read the lessons for the evening ; nor the Latin grace, intoned by two of the scholars, which preluded the oatmeal cake that he could not touch ; he was beyond all help from the Senbury system that night, we fear,—but not beyond all hindrance. When at last his weary feet had taken him to his bedside in the great dormitory, and he fell upon his knees, as was his childish custom, before his Heavenly Father, there burst forth a great shout of laughter ; scarcely a boy in all that room but cast a slipper at him. “None of your sponging upon God Almighty,” roared the snob captain.

We are not sorry if these words shock you, reader, and hurt your proper feeling ; we have heard them spoken under these very circumstances with our own ears, and the date (lest you should think the wicked school times quite of the past) was not so long ago. We heard them,—we were witness to the cruelties hereafter mentioned,—at Senbury School, where we took the Latin oath (which if we broke we were expelled) not to break cathedral windows ; where, if we missed chapel, or smoked, or failed to make up our tale of Latin verses, or went out of bounds, we were publicly and very indecently flogged ; where many great wickednesses, however, were done without any sort of punishment. We dare not set down in this place the blasphemies, cruelties, obscenities, which are familiar to many an English schoolboy even now, which were familiar to very many more in the times we write of ; it needs a Rousseau to confess them, and perhaps a nation of French people to listen to such things. They happen amongst us daily, to be sure, but we prefer not to be shocked by a recital of them ; only some abomination at a military college, only some monitorial thrashing, with in a little of death's door, at a public school, gleams luridly upon a virtuous society here and there, to be covered up and smoothed over by all means ; and, the *mouths* of Etna and Vesuvius being plugged up, “ There is no fire beneath the earth at all, parents and guardians is there ? ”

Robert Birt was of too tender an age for martyrdom, and said his prayers that night in bed instead of out of it ; the play-time—leisure to be spent in recreation—of

the next day was passed by him principally in the company of the snob captain in amusements of the following kind :—His lip having been cut open by the snowballing, he was to come to his tormentor every three hours to have the wound pulled apart lest it should heal ; a half-penny was sometimes heated in the fire and put in the palm of his hand, which was then closed forcibly on it, and held in that position ; the child had to spread his fingers out upon the table that young gentlemen might exert their ingenuity in striking the points of their penknives into the interstices thereof, without touching the flesh ; during the course of which those who were not accomplished in the feat stabbed him pretty frequently. He could not write out “*Tintinnabulum*, a little bell,” in consequence of wounds received in this pleasantry, and he was threatened with a flogging from the warden for that omission ; the poor boy longed for night, and the few short hours of rest and darkness, more than ever did sick man for the morning ; but even these were denied. Next to the play-ground, and only separated from it by a low wall, there was an ancient disused burial-ground belonging to the ruined abbey of Senbury, lying just beyond the present cathedral close ; in the open desecrated vaults there was still a few bones and a skull or two, one of which, for anything that was known to the contrary, might have belonged to *Gulielmus de Wynkyng* himself : a place indeed to be shunned after dark by most people.

“Now, look here coachey,” said the pestilent tyrant, on the second or third night, and as soon as the candle had

been removed from the bed-room, "you get up and dress."

Mechanically, and without answer, the bruised, tortured boy rose, tearless, and put on his gray-coat clothes; upon no being more miserable in Russian serf-land, or upon American slave-soil, did the cold moon glimmer in the wintry night than on that shivering child.

"Go down to the burial-ground and fetch me a skull," said the snob-captain.

"Oh, come," said another boy, "that's a little too much!"

"Blessed if he aint going, however," exclaimed a second.

Yes, Robert Birt was going. Young as he was, he had but little fear, and what fear he had was utterly drowned in his deep and over-mastering misery; down the cold stone steps, and through the hard-to-be-opened iron door, and between the bars of the mighty gate (he was so small), that shut off the playground from the court, and over the low wall, in spite of the Latin oath to the contrary, into the ancient burial-ground, he went. The night was clear and moonlit; the sky serene, save for a few flying clouds that seemed to hasten from off the face of it, as though rebuked for coming between its peaceful pitiful looks and the bare earth. "Oh, to be far away in the calm abysses yonder, where surely there is no snob captain, nor any such thing!" thought little Robert, yearning, although he knew it not, for the Eternal, as passionately as ever did poet; "would that my bones and skull were lying with these relics of a generation of a

thousand years ago, and my soul       " No, Robert had not as yet begun to think about that matter ; the views of Maria in that particular had been too limited to admit of her communicating them to him, and Mrs. Hollis had confined his spiritual education, as yet, to teaching him our Lord's Prayer, which indeed was enough for his needs ; he wished he was dead only, like Miss Dorrit the elder, but with the most earnest sincerity. Presently the boy remembered his errand, found without much difficulty an old skull, and took his way back again to the dormitory, ever and anon turning his face toward Heaven, because, if any friend were indeed left to him, he must surely, he thought, be there ; but when he was about to close the iron-bound door behind him, and shut out the stars, he hesitated, left it ajar, and, instead of going straight up stairs, walked swiftly into a store-room on the right, where the boys' clothes were kept, and taking down those in which he had come to Senbury from their shelf, he put them on instead of his gray-coat dress ; then, leaving the skull upon the cast-off garments, he softly reopened the door, and, returning to the burial-ground, climbed over its eastern wall, and passing through the outskirts of the town, took the road which lay, according to his judgment, the most directly away from London and from Senbury grammar-school.





## CHAPTER VII.

### THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.

**R**OBERT BIRT was not what is considered to be a clever boy, but he had sense and judgment much beyond his years ; although he had run away this night partly upon impulse, it was by no means without some consideration. Had there been reasonable hope of an improvement in his treatment from the snob captain, and the boys generally, he would have endured his misery longer ; or could he have looked for help from Bulbul Square in answer to any complaint of his, he would have written thither in the first place ; but he knew how powerless Mrs. Hollis was, with what difficulty she had placed him at the school at all, and what he had to expect from her husband's tender exertions if Mr. Hollis should get to hear of his having dared to write complainingly. He had manifestly been born into a world which, with the trifling exception of Maria Keggs, did not require his presence ; which hated him, despised him, and contemptuously termed him "coachey." There

was surely something very wrong and very cruel somewhere, thought he, which made him the innocent object of so much unkindness. Was God wrong and cruel? The fog which loomed over the muddy Sen, by which river his road ran for a mile or two, was writhing, serpent-like, above and around him, and darkened all the way, but he knew that the blessed stars were still shining beyond it out of the reach of harm. No, Robert, God was not cruel. Were there any other "coachies" in the world to sympathise with him? such was, or was about to be, his next consideration, when "Hai, hai," hollaed a gruff voice behind him; "smack, smack," cracked a whip. "Why, I nigh druv over you, mun, the fog's so thick, mun! Why, thee'st but a lad, and here 'tis eleven o'clock and more; why, where beest going to?"

"Good-night! good-night!" replied Robert evasively, and in as manful a voice as he could assume.

"Good-night!" cried the carrier, fairly pulling up in astonishment; "why thou'st walking right on into the river; hai! hai!" Then, after a pause, "But wussn't ride? I am going thy way, mun."

The bait took. Poor Robert gladly answered, "Yes, if you please," and in another minute had turned and climbed up into the covered cart.

"Now, my lad," exclaimed the wily carrier, "you see I've got you; now give an account of thyself, young gentleman."

"I am not a gentleman," said Robert, "at all; please don't be angry with me, but I'm only a coachman's son."

"Nay, nay, boy, that may do for Senbury folk, but not

for a Mineton man ; thee beest no coachman's son ; thee hast been and run away from school."

"Oh, pray, pray, don't take me back again !" cried the boy ; "oh, good Sir ! I have been beaten there and sadly used, and they will kill me now if I go back."

"They only beat thee to make thee larn thy Latin," said the man, turning his horse's head ; "it's Doctor Tertle as canes you idle chaps, I reckon."

"Yes, but I don't mean him," urged Robert despairingly ; "see here, my fingers are all cut about with penknives by the boys, and look where the hot halfpennies were put ; I cannot close my hand."

"Penknives ! hot halfpennies ! Good God ! why, I never heard of such things—never. Thee shasn't go back—never fear. Hi, hoss, hi, Dobbin ; go you Mineton road again. Hot halfpennies ! Well, I *am* d—d ! Why, if you'd ha' been my son, I'd cut the villain in two with my whip, as sure as a lived."

"My father is dead," said Robert sorrowfully.

"Poor boy ! poor boy !" said the carrier ; and as his large hand touched the child's head tenderly, the tears, which had been frozen at their source ever since when he had stood before the great gates of the grammar-school, and thought of home, streamed down in plenty, and relieved his bursting heart.

"Poor boy ! Well, I *am* d—d ! Poor boy !" repeated the carrier, again and again, and it was long before he could express himself more fully. "Why, I remember Farmer Bolt's boy being sadly banged at Mineton school for his larning, and such a row as was, to be sure, oh

Lord ! But as for boys putting<sup>t</sup>hot . . eh. what's that you're saying, my lad ? ”

“ Can I go to Mineton school ? I've got a sovereign,” asked Robert timidly.

“ Well, I can't say—we'll see. I'll take you to Mr. Pluckit's ; he knows about these things,” said the carrier thoughtfully. “ Come, thee'llt get cold, my lad ; wrap thyself round in the sack yonder, and get to sleep.”

“ God bless you, Sir, good-night,” said the grateful boy.

“ God bless *thee*, lad,” replied the other heartily ; then (to himself), “ and d—n them Senbury chaps ! Hot halfpennies ! penknives ! ”

The clouds began to gather presently, and the snow to fall, at first flake by flake, then in lines, then in great sheets of white ; the midnight air blew wildly into the front of the cart, and it was as much as Thomas Trot could do to keep his pipe alight, and see where he was going at the same time ; but little Robert Birt slept warm and well amongst the sacking, and never woke until the sun was up, and ready to show him Mineton. When they came to the brow of the heathery hill that commanded the little village, Thomas stopped his horse, and saying to himself, “ Now I dare say the young 'un never seed the sea,” he touched the boy upon the shoulder, who woke up with a start at once, and with a scared look in his eyes.

“ It's only me,” said the carrier assuringly ; “ I thought maybe you'd never seen the water and big ships afore ; ” and so it was. Separated from them by a little strip of

downland, flecked with snow, and terminating in a sheer precipice, lay the boundless ocean, its blue depths starred with sails ; a breeze came from it, bearing an odour from the sea-flowers, fresher than that from any summer rose ; a far away murmur, like that lullaby which Mrs. Hollis had once sung to him, just reached Robert's ear, and failed there ; before him the road, visible at every turn through the tall leafless trees, led, winding, sloping, to a river brink, pursued its course on the left bank a little, then crossed it by a wooden bridge ; beyond, amongst trees also, a crowd of cottages upon the hills on either side the stream, which ran on over yellow sands into the sea. The glory of the morning filled little Robert's heart ; he experienced for the first time the love of that mother whom even orphans possess, all-bountiful nature ; and the tears stood in his filial eyes at sight of her.

"I feel so happy, so very happy !" cried he.

"I am glad of it," said the carrier, as they jogged along again ; "and I hope thee mayst keep so. We must stop here ; this is Mr. Pluckit's."

He tied Dobbin up at the entrance-gate, and, leaving Robert in the cart, took his way through the little shrubbery which led to the house, alone ; he presently returned with a short, slight gentleman, with beady eyes and a white cravat.

"Will you come and breakfast with me, my boy ?" said this person kindly. The child looked up into the carrier's face appealingly, and the faithful Thomas, understanding that glance, replied to it, "Never fear, fellow traveller, thee shasn't be sent back to Senbury."

Mr. Trot was not at any time more given to lying than his betters, but when he said "fellow traveller," his words were always as true as steel ; the having journeyed with him in his own cart, behind his own particular Dobbin, being a bond of friendship in his eye as sacred as the mutual partaking of bread and salt in those of the Arab. Robert was so satisfied of his fidelity, that after a whisper of heartfelt thanks and a parting grip of the hand, he followed his new acquaintance cheerfully into the rectory house.

Mr. Pluckit was a bachelor, and breakfast, consisting of an egg, was laid for one, but this was soon remedied ; a charming old lady brought in another egg and a plate of ham, and as she did so patted Robert on the head approvingly.

"He must be a nice boy since Mrs. Syrup pats him on the head," thought the rector, who had the most undoubting confidence in his housekeeper's discernment. "Why, if she isn't cutting his bread into sippets with her own hands !" added he ; "he must certainly be a very nice boy indeed."

After breakfast, at his host's request, Robert unfolded his Senburj woes, at the recital of part of which the beady eyes very nearly came out of their sockets.

"I should not have thought that such things were possible in a Christian country," said he, when it was over ; "are you sure, my dear boy, that all you have said is true ?"

The child put out his two hands—they were exceedingly dirty—upon the breakfast cloth, and on them were

three-and-twenty stabs and two round burns in all, witnesses for him.

"You won't send me back, Sir, will you?"

"Not," said the little clergyman, upon both of whose cheeks a red-hot spot was glowing famously—"not if the king and queen, and all the royal family, the bench of bishops, and both the Houses of Parliament, and Doctor Tertle, D.D., to back them, were to insist upon it; certainly not. I have a very great mind to write a letter to the Senbury trustees, or knock up the whole school at once in the *Times* newspaper; it is a case where the interference of the press would really not be objectionable," added Mr. Pluckit apologetically, and to express his general abhorrence of radical principles. "But what are your plans, my boy?"

Robert drew out from his pocket a new sovereign, given to him by Mrs. Hollis on his departure from Bulbul Square, and placed it on the table.

"Could I go to Mineton school with that, Sir?"

At this sight Mr. Pluckit was about to laugh right out, but stopped himself to ask on a sudden very seriously (the idea having only just struck him) who were Robert's friends.

"There is nobody then," he resumed, when the biography of Master Birt was finished, "with the exception of this good Mrs. Hollis, who does not seem able to assist you, whom you can depend upon for help at all? No one? Think again; no guardian? no godfather?"

"There's a Mr. Field," said Robert, doubtingly.

"What, a surgeon in Brick Street?"

“Yes, Sir ; he is my godfather.”

“And he is my first cousin, and the best man in the world !” cried the enthusiastic parson.

So Mr. Pluckit sat down to write a letter, with his subject, little Robert, sitting opposite, from whom, as he looked up at him from time to time, he seemed to draw inspiration, for after every glance at him his pen started off again at score.

“Now, my boy,” said Mr. Pluckit, after a while, “I think it right that you should know what I have written about you ; and when you don’t understand anything, or don’t like it, please to stop me.”

“ ‘ *My dear George——* ’ ”

“That’s Mr. Field, I suppose ?” interrupted Robert.

“Why, my good dear boy,” cried the little man, with much irritation, “who else should it be ? Is it likely to be the Pope of Rome, or the King of the Cannibal Islands, or the Great Mogul, or the Shah of Persia that I am writing to, that you ask such a question ? Of course it’s Mr. Field,—George Field. Now then, off again :—

“ ‘ *My dear George,—A young gentleman in whom you are much interested arrived at my house this morning by carrier’s cart, but without direction.* ’ Now, Sir, have you any objection to the wording of that sentence ? ”

“If you please, Sir,” said Robert anxiously, “I had much rather not be called a young gentleman.”

“Oh ! by all means ; shall I say a bald man, or a snowy patriarch ? ‘ *A bald man in whom you are much interested,* ’—there you are !” cried Mr. Pluckit viciously ;



“‘he has been most brutally treated at Senbury Grammar School, which ought to be burnt to ashes, and its site sown with gunpowder ; and if ever the Rev. Tertle, D.D., is in need of a person to perform the last sad offices of pulling his legs upon the scaffold, direct to your sincere friend and cousin, as above. The boy’—I beg your pardon—‘the bald man is desirous of being put to school at this place, and relies, at present, upon a certain sovereign which he possesses, to accomplish that object. Will Mr. Hollis, or any——’”

“Pray, pray, Sir !” broke in Robert Birt, “do not let Mr. Hollis hear anything of what I have done. Oh, Sir ! if you only knew——”

It would have been easy for less kindly eyes than Mr. Pluckit’s, to see what a throng of bitter memories pressed in upon the child and chained his speech.

“There !—there ! my boy, Mr. Hollis is scratched out,” said the soft-hearted clergyman. “‘Is there any one of his friends likely to advance the money—some fifty pounds per annum or so—requisite to educate him here ? It is a farmer’s school.’”

“I entreat you, Sir,” sobbed the little boy, “to send me where there are only coachmen’s sons. I don’t care what I eat and drink, or where I sleep, but put me where they won’t all hate me ; where the poor boys are, Sir.”

“Why, you don’t want to go to the district workhouse, or the parish school, I suppose, do you ?”

“Yes, I do,” replied the boy, with a heightened colour ; “that’s where I want to go,—where they are all coachmen’s sons.”

So Mr. Pluckit inserted even that in the letter, which,

however, he wound up at last with this material addition : —“*You will, of course, easily perceive that the poor boy's mind has been quite unhinged by his cruel treatment.*”

During the three days which intervened before an answer to this epistle could arrive from Mr. Field, little Robert, boy-like, enjoyed the present sunshine, undarkened by any shadows from the future. “Oh ! the wild joys of living !” he might have sung ; “the leaping from rock up to rock,” the tracking rough Mineton Brook from the sandy bay to its source among the wintry hills : its cataracts then, indeed, “haunted him like a passion,” and their thunder-song filled all the chambers of his soul. Upon the beach, also, on some huge fragment toppled from the cliff, the child would sit for hours and watch the tide ; the tall white waves coming in so bravely and drawing back so slowly, stubbornly disputing every inch with earth ; the whirling sea-gulls blown about aloft among the foam, and the fishing smacks running sidelong out to sea. A visit which he paid, with Mr. Pluckit, to the seminary for young gentlemen, a whitewashed villa on the roadside, with playground carefully palisaded in, and paved chiefly with oyster-shells, had not the effect upon him which that gentleman desired. Robert far preferred the parish school, a humble stone-built cottage upon the top of the bleak eastern hill overlooking thirty leagues of sea, although it had no play-ground of its own at all : the glorious boisterous ocean-breeze was always there, roaring and screaming, and the open moor around it seemed a far blither place than that melancholy cloister next the graveyard, where the Senbury boys were wont to

recreate themselves after their manner. "What are they doing at Senbury now?" thought Robert, again and again, with shuddering; and, young as he was, he would have leapt off Mineton Cliff, and ended life, rather than test again that solemn and time-hallowed institution bequeathed by Gulielmus de Wynkyng.

Robert Birt's absence from the Senbury dormitory had not been immediately noticed. His young companions, after waiting in malicious expectation of his coming back from his horrible task, half out of his mind with terror, for an hour or so, went off to sleep in some disappointment. Only the snob captain remained awake, constructing in the serene moonlight a tawse or corrector, out of a pocket-handkerchief and a few marbles. He had heard the great door shut softly behind his victim, and believed that little Birt was passing the night in the clothes' closet beneath, in preference to venturing up again into the bed-room. Presently, having finished his ingenious instrument, and being disinclined for sleep, the snob captain descended the stairs, opened the door on the left-hand side of the passage, and stole quietly in. The dim, cold, ghastly light, shining upon the three-and-thirty suits of clothes depending from their pegs, gave him, at the first glance, the notion that young Birt might have hung himself. A cold sweat took hold of the big bully, and knocked his wicked knees together at once. He shuddered, not at his own crime, but at its consequences, — expulsion, exposure, possibly imprisonment. Good Heavens! what was that? Flap, flap, like a huge raven's wing, the great door swung lazily to and fro, and, at the

same time, the great clock boomed forth the solemn hour of twelve as though it never would have ceased. He turned back, horror-stricken, to run up stairs, but as he turned his feet hitched in a heap of clothes—in Robert Birt, as he imagined, concealing himself in the corner there—and, stooping down with a cry to drag him into the moonlight, the boy's head rolled off, or seemed to roll off, in the snob captain's hands.

From twelve to seven the wintry hours went on, and still little Robert slept in the carrier's cart, and still the snob captain slept, or appeared to do so, upon Robert's clothes; but his eyes, when the morning dawned, were open and fixed; his teeth were set, and his fingers clenched over the tawse. He was not dead, but frightened out of what little wits he had, for ever; doomed, when he recovered from that fit, to dribble and moan, and impotently to contrive cruel schemes under a strait-waistcoat, a madman to his dying day. Small consolation it was to the poor wretch, that the matter was hushed up out of doors; that there was not so much as a hint dropped about the skull found in his hand, or the tawse, by the purple person who came upon him in the morning, as he went to call the boys; or that the Rev. Dr. Tertle assured the bereaved father that no more well-disposed fellow than his unhappy son ever entered Senbury. The new boy had run away, it appeared, from home-sickness; the change from his domestic comforts and coaxings to the healthy discipline in vogue at the institution of Gulielmus de Wynkyng had been too much for his spoiled nature, and a letter was despatched

to Mr. Hollis, to state that the truant would be expelled if he did not return forthwith.

"Upon my word," exclaimed that gentleman to his wife, upon the receipt of this, "your *protégé* does you immense credit; Senbury is not good enough, it seems, for his high origin, and we must look about for a private tutor to accompany him to Eton." Then changing rapidly, as was his custom, from sarcasm to savagery: "I tell you *this*, Madam, that if this young beggar shows his face in my house again, I'll horsewhip him as long as I can stand over him, and then I'll kick him out of doors."

This honourable gentleman served that determination up under so many different forms, and garnished it with such novel and decorative oaths, that for very fear, the poor lady scarcely knew whether she wished little Robert to be found or not. For the rest, Lady Beebonnet industriously circulated a report that, out of spite and economy, Mr. Hollis had murdered the child; a statement Miss Maria Keggs, to whom that account descended with many additional particulars of interest, believed to be strictly true.

"At all events," sobbed she to Mrs. Groves, "the poor little orphan that you took from its mother's breast, and which I nursed and loved so when I was a girl, is somewhere being infamously treated, I know, if it is not a corpse."

"Yes," replied the elder lady, with feeling, but by no means with the volcanic impetuosity of her young friend; "and that must not be. I'll put on my bonnet and just walk down to the Square, to see what can be done for him."

"Why, you aint a-going to speak to Mr. Hollis yourself, *surely*?" ejaculated Maria.

"Aint I? Well, perhaps I am, and perhaps I aint," said Mrs. Groves, oracularly. "Volney Groves' wife isn't going to bide quiet and see wrong done, for fear of having her nose bit off by a nob, neither."

Her visit, however, was, in truth, intended for Mrs. Hollis, and would have been paid solely to that lady, had not the master of the house encountered her in the entrance-hall.

"Now, what are you wanting here, woman?" said he. "We've done with wet-nursing, and other people's brats, for good and all, I promise you."

"Please, Sir," said Mrs. Groves, summoning all her courage, "I want to say a word or two to you in private."

"Well," cried Mr. Hollis, interrupting her, "this is private enough, isn't it? you don't want to make love to me, do you?"

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Mrs. Groves, with unmistakable emphasis, and colouring up to her large ears; "I want to say a word or two about little Robert Birt."

"Stay; now you hear *me*," cried the other, hoarse with passion; "I will not listen to one syllable about him. I'll kill him, if he comes here, mind you. I hate him; and if I had my will——"

"Sir, Sir," interrupted Mrs. Groves, with a strange sort of pity in her face which only served to make the man more frantic; "be careful what you say, for you will be

sorry for it : you have a child yourself, Sir, and suppose that he were in the place of this poor lad ! ”

So frightful a curse broke forth from the other’s mouth, as she said this, that the poor woman, though she had lived in Rag Street for so many years, and had been accustomed all her life to the conversation of the lowest, was positively terrified into silence, and mechanically walked out at the door which Mr. Hollis held open for her ;—nay, in such a state of bewilderment and shiver was she thrown, that she was addressed twice by name on her way home, before she stopped and recognised her old acquaintance, Mr. Field.

“ I beg your pardon, Sir,” said she, when she became sensible of his presence ; “ but I have been worried nigh out of my senses, and aint a responsible bean.” And with that she told him what had been the cause of her aberration.

“ Singular,” said he, “ very singular ! I was myself going to Bulbul Square upon this very same business of young Birt ; but if Mr. Hollis is in such a state as you describe, it will be a bootless errand. How came you, Mrs. Groves, to think of offering your advice to a man of his character ? ”

The woman’s naturally roseate hue became of near kin to the peony, as she stammered out some platitude about “ a word in season ; ” but her interrogator did not notice her confusion, or he put it down, perhaps, to modesty at her being caught in so well-intentioned an errand.

“ I have had news,” said he, “ which convinces me I could find the boy, if it were really advisable.”

“ Is he pretty comfortable and healthy, Sir ? ” asked

Mrs. Groves, whose eyes were curiously interested in a join of the street pavement.

"Pretty well for that," returned the doctor, "but he will have to make his own way in the world now, poor fellow ; he has a very different life before him from that he used to lead in Bulbul Square."

"*That* won't hurt the lad," replied the lady sharply, "that'll do him good."

"We will hope so," answered the other ; "and when I hear of him again, I will let you know of it."

When Mr. Field had returned to his own house, he opened his desk very slowly, and sat over it, musing, pen in hand, some time after he had accomplished the "My dear Pluckit," which began his communication ; at last, "There is a friend of this young Birt's," he wrote, "who is willing to allow him fifty pounds a year, and a little more if necessary, to keep him at the school you mention ; but nevertheless he is far from agreeing with you as to the foolishness of the boy in wishing to associate, after such an experience as he has had, with those only of his own rank. I too consider that, young as he is, something may have taught him more wisdom in this respect than our theories suggest to us ; let him, therefore, have free choice of your parish school or your fashionable seminary ; at either place his friend and I are well assured that he will have the benefit of your kind supervision ; his late guardian (?), Mr. Hollis, is very irate against the lad, and likely to do him harm rather than good, for which reason, and for other reasons, it is better that the whole matter be kept secret."



The letter concluded with some pecuniary arrangements suitable to either of the cases proposed, and upon its arrival in due course at Mineton Robert Birt was put in possession of its contents. He at once elected, to Mr. Pluckit's astonishment and Mrs. Syrup's indignation, to become a member of the parish school; and he was placed there almost immediately, and had his lodgings at the schoolmaster's.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL.

**M**ASTER HENRY ADOLPHUS PLANTAGENET BROOKS HOLLIS was a very sharp boy indeed; the idol of his mother and the terror of his friends. He was not, indeed, one of those monstrosities of early learning who declaim "My name is Norval" to patient suffering audiences, with murder in their hearts, or fix elderly gentlemen, half a century from school, with quotations out of the syntax; but he was unscrupulous as well as precocious: he would cut himself an excellent wig out of a door-mat, puff out his childish cheeks as if with plumpers, impart very tolerable *delirium tremens* to his hands, and enter the drawing-room, a capital parody upon the Honourable George Lord Rexham, his uncle and godfather. The irreverent little mimic would even flour his hair, array himself in a table-cloth, put on gold spectacles, white cravat and bands, and preach over the back of a chair, after the well-known manner of the Right Reverend the Bishop of Plumbun, to the de-

light of his father and a select congregation of after-dinner friends ; but perhaps the talents of Master Adolphus were most successfully exhibited, when he would come up the great staircase with a solemn noiseless step, arranging his countenance and his waistcoat, putting his hair well back from his forehead, coughing very delicately, and announcing his presence by the bland intonation of "Well, now, how are we this fine morning?" in contempt of poor old Sir Toby Ruffles, who most vehemently detested the boy in return. His infant spirit rose against being excluded from accompanying gay Lady Beebonnet to the Opera, from drinking like papa did, from grown-up festivities, in fact, of all kinds. Many an evening, when his nurse looked high and low for the young truant, he would be lying hid beneath the dining-room table, surrounded by sixteen pairs of unconscious legs belonging to his parents' guests, twitching this and pinching that, and even cautiously inserting a pin's point when the temptation of the ample calf of a stout gentleman or lady, encased in its silk stocking, was too overwhelming. At last, when the hushed surmise that there must be "some horrid dog under the table" got to be openly expressed, young Pickle would rush out between the two most nervous persons in the company, barking. Mr. Hollis's favourite terrier, Vic, almost met with his death in consequence of this agreeable *trait* in his young master ; for, being on one occasion in Adolphus's hiding-place, and smelling about Sir Charles Lester's aristocratic legs, the baronet, at once concluding it was "that bore of a boy," against whom he had a grudge of this kind, of old stand-

ing, kicked out from the knee with imperturbable face, but so vigorously as to break a couple of Vic's ribs. The child was a mischievous spoiled lad indeed, bad in London, but worse in the country, where he had greater freedom. At Blayfield Park, too, the Hollis seat in Rookshire, his delinquencies, unhappily for him, came more under the notice of his father, because he had the more leisure to observe them. "Why is not that boy gone to school?" was Mr. Hollis's question, put more and more querulously after each offence, till, at last, the fiat went forth in real earnest, not to be repented of. The immediate cause was this:—The windows of the Blayfield breakfast-room opened into a little conservatory, the side panes of which were painted in illustration of Scripture history. A glazier having been sent for to effect some alterations, Master Adolphus was watching his movements from the ladder's foot, when a natural desire seized him of ascending the same.

"Mayn't I get up along with you?" enquired Master Adolphus.

"No, Sir," said the man, respectfully.

"I will, though," cried the boy, pulling doggedly at the bottom step, "see if I don't."

"Nay, Sir, you must not come up," repeated the glazier, firmly.

"Well, then, you'll come down to me," quoth the young Pickle, putting forth all his strength.

Down came man and ladder, as he predicted, but with results that had not entered into his calculations.

They dashed through a pink St. Peter with a blue key,

like a couple of fanatic Puritans, scraped a little upon the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, and came to the ground with a crash among the ruins of Susannah and the Elders.

"You have been and done it now, young gent," observed the glazier ; and the observation was a just one.

In three weeks from that epoch, Master Adolphus was at Miss Priscilla Campbell's, conductress of an establishment for young ladies and young gentlemen ; for his health was delicate and required female supervision. He had not suffered this reverse without a struggle ; he cried, he screamed, he kicked ; he used, as a last resource, even a naughty oath or two, selected out of his father's extensive vocabulary. He was dreadfully indisposed, with a tongue that chalk had whitened to an extent unparalleled in the annals of sickness, and with a light head that ran upon his beloved parents and a better world in a manner calculated to work upon the sympathies of an ogre. But Mr. Hollis was considerably beyond an ogre in this respect, and though the boy never took one pill, and could have set up a large homœopathic establishment with the medicines he contrived to conceal about the bed-clothes, the morning draughts he could not evade by any cunning ; and much reduced in health and spirits, he had to give up the contest after the first fortnight, and to school Master Adolphus went, after all. This was no very severe punishment, nevertheless, inasmuch as he came home to Blayfield every evening, and passed only five hours of the day in attending to his studies. Miss Priscilla herself, too, besides having a very accurate notion of how young noblemen ought to be fostered, was, except

as to personal appearance,—in which, indeed, she resembled a general officer,—far from being a strict disciplinarian. She was a big-boned woman, of large stature, possessed a pair of iron-gray moustachios, indulged (upon the sly) in snuff, and spoke *ore rotundo*, as if to a regiment on the parade-ground. She wore a most placid looking eyeglass, with no frame to it, and the things which it knocked against without getting broken, and the queer places it visited in one day's experience, were marvels to her youthful pupil. It used to drop down his back, by way of the nape of his neck, ever so far, while she was overlooking his writing lesson, sometimes before and sometimes after it had wandered into the ink. Master Adolphus learnt of this lady, geography,—including the theory of latitude and longitude,—and a smattering of French, sufficient to enable him to understand the younger girls when they wanted to talk secrets to one another. He was also instructed, after a fashion, in history, being informed that Charles the First was a pious and truth-telling monarch, Cromwell, a base and selfish tyrant, and Charles the Second a merry but estimable king; it being the peculiarity of lady historians (whose works alone were in use at Miss Priscilla's) to take that singular view of those three potentates. Master Adolphus also here learnt his first love-lesson, by devoting himself to a beautiful young lady of the name of Lucy, whom he kissed repeatedly, by dint of standing on tiptoe. The boys, who had a horrible habit of spitting at one another, and even at their fair companions, he did not much associate with. The barbarous character of young ladies' punishments

filled his whole soul with pity. There was a kind of rack, upon which both bad and good were stretched for half an hour every day, and wherefrom (for he tried it once by way of experiment) he got an immediate vertigo. There was also a sort of infernal machine for putting their feet into what was called the "first position," that might have been invented by Torquemada himself, and whereby Lucy's ankles, which were what is called "gummy," were more than once partially dislocated. There was a grand exhibition of talent after each half-year, which the friends of the pupils attended, and whereat, at the close of a twelvemonth, Master Adolphus repeated the Lord's Prayer in Latin, before an admiring but uncritical audience. For this achievement, and in consequence, perhaps, of his high birth (since "good conduct" and "merit" had unhappily little to do with it), he received a large pink card, with an openwork edging trimmed with blue silk, whereon were extolled his personal virtues and the generosity of the donor.

Through pretty Lucy, the pink card, and general fondling, the young gentleman was, in truth, not much improved by his year's residence at Miss Priscilla's. He was perpetually trying his father's temper (which did not mellow with age), not only by escapades, but with contradiction—for he inherited the "indomitable will" with a vengeance; and although the old gentleman loved him next best to his beloved self, he determined to send him somewhere else to learn better manners. The boy had trusted to have warded off this peril for a little longer—for he had the presentiment of evil which is common to most boys

regarding school—but he now saw that Nemesis was imminent. When his Liliputian linen began to be marked with their H. A. P. B. H. ; when the butler set aside the silver fork and spoon which would not be returned (a little notched and dented, but “good enough for them school-masters”); when remarks began to be dropped by mamma about “the time soon passing ;” when unwonted aphorisms regarding “gentlemanly conduct” were let fall by papa during the dessert ;—then Master Adolphus knew that there was indeed no escape, and that he was going to school in earnest. The day arrived at last of which he had augured so ill, and it fulfilled his augury.

Apollos Dickson, A.C.P., assisted by a competent staff of eminent teachers, and retaining upon the premises efficient foreigners of European celebrity, received a limited number of the sons of noblemen and gentlemen only, to prepare for the public schools and universities ; and it had happened, by singular fortune, that there was a vacancy at this desirable establishment at the precise period when Mr. Hollis communicated with its head. When Master Adolphus and his mother drove up to Harfield House on the dread day, the boys who were in the *gymnasium* (square piece of inextensive playground which derived its classical appellation from a swing) stopped their play awhile to stare and make their observations upon their new companion ; and “Twig his blue cap,” “What a muff he looks,” and “I don’t envy him,” were some of the least discouraging. Apollos Dickson was, however, a reassuring person, mild and doughy-looking, and with white-brown hair ; his eyes (which were known



in school-time to assume a wrathful aspect) wore, on the arrival of a new boy with parent, a most benevolent expression; a mother could scarcely think that the hand which grasped her own so benignantly could be familiar with a cane.

The acute Master Adolphus conceived a vague idea that he would somehow propitiate this potentate by eating nothing at luncheon, and steadily refused all his hospitable proffers. When Mrs. Hollis went with the principal's wife to visit the dormitories, and the boy was left alone with Apollos, that great man began to write, without taking any sort of notice of him; a course of conduct which utterly floored Master Adolphus, who had prepared certain cunning answers to all questions which might be asked him concerning his proficiency in the Latin tongue (having no intention of being worked too hard through finding himself placed in a class beyond his merits). Balked in this plan, he took up a volume of the pedagogue's "Christian Ethics," then exhibiting upon the drawing-room table, and pretended to be deeply interested in the same, whereas he was employed in wondering whether that gentleman was setting down his appearance and leading features, with a view to his capture should he ever be driven to run away; he even began to squint and contort his countenance, in order to prevent this taking place, so that the principal, looking up upon a sudden, said to himself, "Very well, my young friend; you are making faces at me already, are you?"

Presently the ladies came down again, and after a considerable amount of civil lying, such as takes place on the

like occasions, Mrs. Hollis took her departure. With the noise of her retreating chariot-wheels died away all hope in the heart of her son. The whole of his pocket-money—one pound, fourteen shillings, a crooked sixpence, and a new farthing,—his two cakes and his basket of oranges, would he then have given for one kiss of his dear mother, had such a sacrifice been possible. He was at once consigned by Apollos to one of the big boys, who was enjoined to take care of him and to keep him out of mischief; duties which he executed, we are bound to say, very imperfectly. He introduced him, however, basket in hand, to his schoolfellows, and having transferred about a dozen oranges to his own pockets, distributed the rest, Pomona like, with much liberality, even to the extent of shying one or two at the more exposed countenances in his vicinity. The effect of this generous conduct upon the part of his protector was not proportionably favourable to poor Adolphus.

“Well, you young fool, you’ve got us a half-holiday, of course,” said one young gentleman.

“I think he’d better, or I’ll show him,” was the elliptical expression of another, with a black eye and a swollen face.

An explanation on the part of the new arrival that he had omitted to do so from ignorance, and an offer to rectify the error by a personal appeal to Apollos, were received with contumely and contempt. It was only the “governors” of new arrivals, it seemed, who could obtain these favours.

It would puzzle the philosopher who asserts that man,

when uninfluenced by passion, is a humane animal, to explain why these young gentlemen, yet yellow-mouthed with their new companion's oranges, should have set to work, like one boy, to kick him ; but so it happened. It was some fig-leaf of shame still clinging to their natures, perhaps, that made them designate this attack as a game, a recreation ; they called it "the king of the cobblers," but it was very little fun for the king.

When he had received a great many contusions, and the moral sense (or whatever this healthy feeling may be called by the muscular-Christian educationalists) of the boys had been temporarily satisfied, Master Adolphus was permitted to limp away and enjoy his own society in a corner of the gymnasium. Soon, however, a young gentleman of about his own age, with a Greek cap stuck knowingly upon one side of his head, and a hand in the left pocket of his trousers clinking marbles, came up to him, to enquire, as he said, after his health and happiness. Health, he observed, was everything, particularly to the young, and begged him for his (the stranger's) sake to take care of his constitution. He volunteered to give him information upon all the ways of the place, avowing that any other boy but himself would have been sure to have "crammed" him, or tried to borrow some "tin : " he was much disgusted that Adolphus had not contrived to secrete some oranges about his person, "a precaution," he remarked, "which might have occurred to the meanest capacity ;" but was comforted by the intelligence that there were cakes, which he offered to convey to his new friend's bed-room, which he happened to share. Accord-

ingly, when night arrived, this disinterested youth, whose name was Legion, ran up to the dormitory first, and put something under Hollis's pillow; he then cut up a cake in public, distributing an enormous hunch to every occupant of the apartment. The biggest boy, who was called "Captain," and a conscientious person for a schoolboy, suggested that "the new beggar" should be permitted to partake of his own feast, but Legion, giving Hollis a nudge, answered for him that he was not hungry. Partly from the nudge, but principally from a sensation of crumbs in every corner of the bed, Adolphus began to suspect that the other cake was under his pillow, as indeed it was, and during the silent watches of the night Legion consumed very nearly all of it.

While the young gentlemen were gorging themselves, the new boy was requested to favour the company with a song; an expressed ignorance of words and tune being held as an untenable excuse, and replied to by a rain of slippers. The judicious Legion, however, suggested a compromise in the shape of a story, and (without the capacity of the improvisatore being considered in the least) a debate arose as to what it should be about. One pale melancholy youth entreated in a whisper that it should have no ghosts in it, and the captain, who was fifteen, and considered himself to be in love with the maid-servant, insisted on its having lots of sentiment. The bandit and murder party, however, were far the strongest, and (with a faint stipulation from a very small boy that it was to be "about a king") the author was enjoined to "make it horrible and cut along."

After about five minutes' "law," which he in vain attempted to give to compilation, Master Adolphus informed them that there was once upon a time a prince (which he thought would meet the wishes of the gentleman who had last spoken, and yet not appear too like dictation), and he had three sons and three daughters. And here, like many more celebrated authors, our novelist made the mistake of raising more ghosts than he could lay, of conceiving more characters than he knew what to do with, for it took him the whole half-year to marry off these six high-born folks, which the little royalist (who must have been of German extraction) and the gallant captain both insisted upon his getting done. However, although rather hurried upon the night before the holidays (which was, as it were, the double number of the narration, and required everything to be satisfactorily wound up), and considerably interrupted by the bolsters of an illiterate and unsympathising few, he finally brought the story to a triumphant conclusion in the harrowing executions of all the principal characters.

The improvisatore's own history during this period was far from satisfactory, although he wrote buoyantly enough, as such lads will do, to his mother at home.

"I wish 'to goodness," wrote he, "that the governor had just paid a visit to Harfield House himself, instead of taking everything on trust from old Dickson's *Prospectus*; I wish he had paid one-tenth part of the attention he bestows upon Romulus and Remus in the hunting season, to the care of his beloved and only Adolphus. It seems very strange that he should have left me (who had never

been away from home for a single day) in a strange place like this, among the vilest savages,—‘Manners none and customs disgusting,’ as Sir Charles is so fond of quoting,—who do and say things such as I can’t write of, and who are cruel to me to the last degree; without a friend of whom to ask any help, without a creature to care whether I laugh or cry, with nothing, indeed, but a *Prospectus* to trust to, which is, from beginning to end, one enormous fib. Do you know that that ‘delightful expanse of wood and verdure’ is that miserable little grass-plot in front of the house (which we are caned for setting foot upon), together with two mangy elm-trees, one of which stands in the boundary hedge, and belongs just as much to the farmer opposite as it does to old Dickson! The ‘maternal care’ is confined to washing my head once a week with some nasty soft soap that looks like the inside of bad figs, and giving me jalap whether I want it or not. The being ‘treated as one of the family’ means, that when the young Apollos was caught smoking a bit of cane in the back yard, I was spattered—flat piece of wood with a hole in it—by the old one for administering to his son a light, which if I had not done he would have thrashed me. Then, again, what does the *Prospectus* mean by ‘leave of absence granted only under peculiar circumstances?’ Aint it written with the express intention of torturing us boys, when we happen to have the luck to be asked home? (Don’t you think that a day or two’s change of air, by-the-bye, might do me good? I’ve got a most horrid cold.) Hasn’t he (I mean old Dickson) made up his mind to let us go, long before? Has he not already written the letter

which we are to take with us, expressing the highest encomiums upon our private characters, and describing the pleasure he experiences in giving us permission?—and yet he will stand fingering his watch-chain, enquiring of ushers, looking over the summary of study ‘marks’ (where I have got ten *males*, I am sorry to say, and a *pessime* from the mathematical master), and aggravating us into perspirations, by the hour.

“Legion, who has a brother at Sandhurst, declares that ‘peculiar circumstances’ are always admitted *there*, in granting leave, without enquiry ; only, when five of his aunts had died in as many months, the governor refused him leave to pay the last sad obsequies to the sixth, with a ‘No, Gentleman Cadet Legion, there has already been too great a mortality in your family.’ There it is all fair, and the boys and the governor understand one another ; but here—there’s nothing but a *Prospectus*. There’s special mention in that of ‘pudding every day,’ if you remember. I should like you to taste that pudding, and just to calculate—it would not take you long—the plums in it. Apollos Dickson, A.C.P., may say what he pleases in his ‘Ethics’ against the Jesuits, but Ignatius Loyola himself, whom I read about at Miss Campbell’s in ‘*Magnall’s Questions*,’ was an unborn babe for innocence, in comparison with the man who composed our *Prospectus*.

“The ushers are the best part of this place. The senior is very tall, and wears his red hair erect upon his head like a flame of fire, so that when he puts on his hat it seems like clapping on an extinguisher : the scarlet

waistcoat and golden chain with which he adorns himself, combined with his hair and ruddy complexion, make him look like the Vesuvius of my magic lantern. As for Moodie, the junior, he is small, and mild, and quiet, and dresses in black from top to toe, so that we call him 'Outer Darkness;' I shall not tell you what we call the other, because it's profane; but Moodie is a trump. All we little chaps like him, because he won't let us be bullied when he can help it; he says it is as bad for the big fellows to lick us as for us to be licked by them, but that's all my eye: however, that's what he says. Douglas, a beastly bully, was making poor little Johnson yesterday—an Indian boy, whose parents are a long way off, and I wish you'd ask him home—stand up in a corner to open his mouth and have peas shot down it, and I heard Moodie give him a bit of his mind. 'You are like those savage beasts, Douglas, who, after once tasting blood, are ever hankering after it; I have watched you growing worse and worse in your abominable delight in inflicting pain upon helpless objects. Are you not ashamed of yourself, to be making bitter that poor sick boy's hour of enjoyment? And then he whispered something to Douglas, who hung down his head at hearing it, and replied, in his sulky manner, that he didn't know. But he did know, as we all do, that Johnson can't live long, poor fellow, for he has had the consumption, or something, upon him this great while. 'It's an unchristian and cowardly thing,' Moodie went on.

"'Oh come, I aint afraid, I'll fight anybody in the school,' said Douglas, firing up; (and, indeed, I suppose



he would, except, perhaps, Harvey *Major*); ‘and, as for unchristian, why I’ve never skipped church.’

“‘Church,’ cried Moodie, taking him up quite sharply; ‘if you had never gone to church in all your life, and never should go hereafter, you would not commit half the crime that you are now committing in torturing that poor boy. “Have compassion one of another; love as brethren: be pitiful, be courteous;”—instead of writing out a couple of hundred lines of Virgil, you will repeat to me those two or three words out of the New Testament every morning.’

“There was quite a row about all this, for Douglas complained to old Dickson because Moodie had said he was not a Christian, and Apollos rather sided with the bully, saying such sacred matters were scarcely applicable to the play-ground; however, as long as I remain in the lower forms and am a fag, I shall certainly agree with the junior usher.

“Well, mother, you ask me to tell you what we do all day long, and here it is:—When we first come down into this inky cheerless school-room, a chapter out of the Bible is read, verse by verse, by all of us: some of the little chaps think all the words in italics ought to be emphasised, and they make sad stuff of it; they say—but I dare say it is an old story, for Mr. Moodie says it is—that when reading about Balaam, a small boy said, ‘And Balaam said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass: and they saddled *him*.’ After this, we write out Greek Delectus, nor shall I ever forget my first morning at it. Not particularly handy with those corkscrew letters, I was minding my  $\phi$ ’s

and ξ's with great gravity, when I got a punch in the side that took away my breath, and spoilt all my work at the same time. Turning round, quite aghast, I was surprised to find that nobody had the least suspicion of such an event having occurred; the boy on the side from which the blow had come had got a literal translation (or crib) of the exercise in his lap, which he was transcribing with such alterations as might make it appear the more natural; and the boy beyond was copying from him with the like precautions. As soon as I went on with my work the punch was repeated. 'Hollis, don't let me see you talking again,' roared old Dionysius, when I attempted to remonstrate with my neighbour. After that, I got a slip of paper pushed to me, on which was written that I was a fool, and that I was to pass it (the punch) on to the rest; there are about a dozen of these 'pass it ons' every school time, and if one happens to be little, and next the wall, you get everybody else's pleasantry, and dare not originate any yourself. After breakfast—which is not a sumptuous repast by any means—I am generally seized upon by Douglas, and harnessed with a lot of other boys to a sort of go-cart, wherein he sits; most of the team are stronger and longer than I am, so that I cannot keep up with them, and therefore get extra cuts of the whip. There is one Pawker who acts as slave-driver,—because Douglas is too lazy,—and he runs by the side to thrash us; not being high enough in the school to bully and fag himself, he is the toady of all who can; he beat poor little Johnson horribly on one occasion, because he couldn't 'keep up to collar,' and recommended that he

should be bound and fastened to the vehicle, which was actually done : the lad was dragged at Douglas's chariot wheels till he was almost as dead as Hector. I wonder what Johnson's guardian would have said, had he seen him thus 'roughing it,' and 'being made a man of,' which is the purpose, it seems, for which he has sent him here.

"On Saturdays we have half-holidays, and the weekly allowance of a shilling to the upper forms, and a sixpence to us juniors, is given out ; the whole twenty weeks' allowance is, however, often bought up by speculative fellows like Pawker, at the commencement of the half-year, for three bob or so, ready money ; but as threepence out of this can be stopped to pay for broken windows, and other damages, and as nobody is careful of such things who has once mortgaged his property, their gains are not so very great, after all. At one o'clock on Saturday, and (very curiously) just before the dinner-hour, there comes a tart-woman ; the extent of our purchases is limited to a shilling each, but the capitalists get the moneyless to buy for them, so that it is possible towards the close of the half, and when 'tips' are become very rare, for a rich boy to amass seven or eight shillings' worth of delicacies. We never, however, can get bread by any means, which please to remember, as in your last parcel the ham had to be overspread with the marmalade, and the cheese eaten with strawberry jam, so that some of us were made rather sick.

"Sunday is a very welcome day with us ; we get up at 8 instead of 6.30, and have fruit pie for dinner, instead of 'stick-jaw ;' when it is a bad day I am afraid there is

a good deal of betting (in toffy and lolls) about whether we shall have to go to church or not, and when it rains (but yet not enough to stop us), and our long line with its little green umbrellas has to wind along the plashy paths like a caterpillar, we grumble famously. What churchyard coughs are caught during those journeys to be let loose during sermon time ! How colds in the head make one vast trumpet of us Harfield boys ! Legion has generally incipient consumption the next morning, and bids Mrs. Dickson take the consequences if he is made to get up before ten o'clock.

“And now if I tell you anything of him, or any other boy, please to keep it a secret, mind, as you promised. I used to think Legion such a particularly good boy ; during the lessons, and the singing, and even the sermon, he was always reading his Prayer-book, as though he could never take his eyes off it : this devoutness (as Mr. Moodie said when it was all found out) was the more touching, because it extended to his neighbours, and seemed to illustrate the attraction of real piety, inasmuch as they preferred his pages to their own ; but I am sorry to say that under the loose cover of his ‘Church Service,’ Master Legion was wont to insert less orthodox publications, such as ‘The Life of Turpin ;’ and the others got to be aware of it. He took, however, his consequent flogging like a Spartan, and said something about ‘ecclesiastical intolerance’ to old Dickson in the middle of punishment, which earned for him seven more cuts than usual. Legion is the amusement and wonder of the whole school ; no clown could make the faces which he

contrives, with such impunity, against the masters ; one half of his countenance is serious while the other is like a goblin's. I have seen him stick an imposition, that he had to learn by heart, in an usher's hat, and read it right off the gentleman's head without discovery. Our French master is, however, the target for his especial pleasantry a fine fellow, who served in the Imperial Guard at Waterloo, where I dare say he wishes himself again, pretty often ; his favourite expression is, 'Ah, le bon Dieu !' and Legion uses its literal translation on all occasions, protesting when rebuked that Mons. Delamer taught it him. That gentleman has a private dialogue book wherefrom he reads English questions for us to render into the equivalent French. Legion, always at the head of his class, and the first of course to be interrogated, affects not to know when the lesson is begun, and understands it as private conversation ; replying to M. Delamer's question, 'Wheech do you prefere, curaçoa, vanille, noyau, or eau de vie ?' 'Really, Monsieur, I never drank any, but I am excessively fond of bottled porter.' And when the indignant foreigner blurts out, 'You, Mistare Legion, you are most impertinante, you Sare !' our friend replies, quite innocently, as though translating, 'Vous, Monsieur Legion, vous êtes très impertinent, vous Monsieur.'"

Such was the sort of letter which the elastic Master Adolphus would despatch to his mother from Harfield whenever he wanted a tip, or a parcel from home : it was happily the nature of the boy to see the sunny side of a school life rather than the other, but we are certain that,

in the majority of cases, our far-off school memories, seemingly so filled with pleasantness, are quite untrustworthy, and that the pleasures of school are utterly incommensurate with its pains. It is pleasant to behold a meeting between two old school-fellows whom scores of years have separated, but meanwhile treated kindly ; with great full hearts, and stomachs, and pockets, with jolly wives and thriving children, and in the possession of more comforts than they ever had in their lives before ; pleasant to hear them talk of that glorious time at dear old Whackem's, and how they shall never see such days again. But if these hardy insensitive good folks could really analyse one day's experiences of that far-off school-time, what liars would their memories be proved to be. They have kept no record of the exacting master, of the cruel bully, of the wicked filthiness talked of and enacted ; of the long long dreary hours they spent in the hot ugly school-room through the pleasant Junes, where their very glances at the gleaming tree-tops out-of-doors went not unpunished ; of the uncongenial task, and of the brief play-time passed in tyranny or in slavery, in their big-boy time or in their small.

Not seldom there is a less pleasant sight of downlooking, sneaking fellows, old in cunning and deceit ; or of fierce, blustering men, unhappily with power over others ; whose respective characters were made for them by their treatment while at school ; where the delicate weak youth had to lie and cringe to escape wanton cruelty, until lying and cringing have become his nature ; where the burly, animal-passioned boy was so long permitted to make his

fellows miserable, that he has grown up a tyrant in his place among men. It is idle to say that the troubles of boyhood are light and trivial; they are such as no grown man would endure upon any account; they are trying to health and feeling, to body and to soul, and are of thrice the consequence of later experiences, inasmuch as our future is dependent on them; besides, school life in England forms one quarter of our entire being,—alas! often enough the whole of it,—and whether that quarter or that whole be made wretched or otherwise, is certainly of some moment. The saddest part of all this (and yet that which should afford very great comfort) is, that school might be made as happy a place as youth, and innocence, and freshness of thought could combine to make it. Lessons must be learnt, commands must be obeyed, the cane, perhaps, in obstinate and rebellious cases must be employed, but why let loose the vilest passions of our nature at their rankest prime to make school-time hideous?

Would you see your son at home beating his little brother every day to satisfy his brutal delight in another's pain, without forbidding that recreation? Would you see him shut himself up with a cat in order to torture it before putting it to death, without remonstrance? These devilish lusts, under your roof, never entered into him, you will say, perhaps. And yet, when he goes to school amongst his fellows, he will be taught to take delight in both these amusements. Why, then, content yourself with pretending to think that he is roughing it, and being made a man of, instead of giving a piece of your mind to that *laissez aller* hexameter-and-pentameter-making Whackem? We, our-

selves, were very far from being milksops ; we were fully alive to the exquisite illegalities of a school-life at all times ; to the joys of smoking cane until we made a funnel of our very nose and ears ; to the bliss of getting out of bounds into unlicensed orchards ; to the necessity of a composed and dormant appearance to defy the scrutiny of a disturbed master, after a bolstering. We were great at football ; we were a most distinguished "chevy." Never shall our voice be raised against the just reproof, administered by hand or foot, of "cheek" and "coxinness ;" only let it be decreed, for the sake of the hundreds of young hearts now sorrowful and heavy-laden, and of the thousands to come after them, that a deliberate act of tyranny—the wanton infliction of pain for the pain's sake—shall be punished by expulsion, and the major part of school misery will be at once removed. Nothing less will avail, we are certain. The most immediate supervision of the discreetest master can only diminish the evil, not abolish it ; nor after any sort of quarantine can a lad afflicted with this mange of cruelty be pronounced clean and cured. We are only sure that he will get worse the more he has his way. We do not permit in men what we pronounce to be "healthy" amongst boys ; and the Douglasses and Pawkers would be shot or hanged if they carried out their predilections in the world, and amongst grown-up people.

When Master Adolphus wrote home to his mother that little Johnson had been eating laurel leaves, having understood that they were poisonous, in the hope, if not of dying, of at least becoming so ill as to be sent home, she



thought her son was joking ; her tender heart could not conceive youth driving youth to such a fearful pass, in earnest. This poor boy, from some vague wish of preserving even his inanimate possessions from an experience of Harfield House, would never take there, at the end of his vacations, any favourite book, or especial bat and ball, which he would have been really glad to have had, and, doubtless, bewailed the fate of his silver fork and spoon—which the *Prospectus*, veracious for once, gave notice would never be returned—sincerely.

Even light-thinking Master Adolphus, in one of his pyrotechnic letters, being touched in the tender heart that lay low down somewhere within him, wrote of little Johnson thus : “When I look upon the wan face and weary eyes of him who was, they say, so bright and joyous when he first came hither, and never see them lightened by a smile ; when I know that a word even of kindness calls the blood up—he is so unused to it—into that pale cheek, and causes that little arm to be upraised against an expected blow, I do not require Mr. Moodie to tell me what is the chief curse of Harfield, and the greatest void in what the *Prospectus* terms its ‘paternal and uncoercive government.’”



## CHAPTER IX.

### WINTON.

**I**T had never been intended by Mr. Hollis that his son should remain long at Harfield, and the accounts which that young gentleman gave of Apollos Dickson, and which Apollos Dickson gave of him, were not of a nature to extend his term of residence. At the age of twelve, Master Adolphus was removed to the public school of Winton. Everybody—who is anybody—knows Winton by experience or report. Generals and statesmen, designed for those elevated positions from their earliest youth, have been brought up at that seminary in numbers sufficient to fill ten Westminster Abbeys. Wintonians flood the peerage; they speak, and sleep, and vote in scores amongst the Commons; in the pulpits, in the law courts, popular or drones, notorious or briefless, Winton has countless scions. She is the nursery of the supporters of the gentlemanly interest; she teaches Latin verses and “the tone.” The Latin verses are taught in a more mitigated

manner at other places, but at Winton there is—or was when Master Hollis knew it—*nothing but* Latin verses taught, save Greek ones. The tone (which costs 250*l.* a year) cannot be procured at any other establishment in the kingdom. No Wintonian ever loses it. It is inoculated into his system, and protects him from the small-pox of vulgarity for the remainder of his days. Nobody can define the tone; it is like the highest kind of suggestive and metaphysical poetry; and if you don't feel the effects of it, and appreciate at once its inestimable but inconvertible value, you are a radical and a snob. It is by no means the sort of thing which goes by the same name in the practice of medicine, and to revive which bark is taken; but, on the contrary, it is rather a used-up, sublime, phlegmatic, and patent-leathery tone. Its motto is "*Cui bono?*" and its arms a double opera-glass.

Nevertheless, Winton has good gifts. The British schoolboy is certainly less like a brute animal there than elsewhere. Public feeling, rarely just and good amongst boys, is there at least far from bad. We have known bullies at Winton forced to expiate their cruel acts by running the gauntlet through ranks of several hundreds of their schoolfellows, with very few to spare them. No young gentleman of fifteen and upwards is there entrusted with the power of thrashing his companions by reason of his being "in the sixth;" no monitorial system (art of keeping a school without a sufficient number of assistant masters) permits, at Winton, youth to stand over youth, with cane after cane, until the victim drops. No gentle reproof from the authorities, allowing the monitor

had "exceeded his duty;" no general verdict from the boys of "served him right," would in such case have been awarded there; but expulsion and "a college hiding" into the bargain, would await any such cruel prig. Withering epigrams would have been written upon such an offender in the Greek tongue, and perhaps delivered in Winton Hall by thin-legged scholars in knee-breeches and silk stockings; nay, he would be conveyed to a certain chamber (known to the writer), accompanied by a great troop of his companions, and there flogged before them all upon a wooden block, in the most indecent manner that can possibly be conceived.

"*Floreat Wintonia*," say we; only we do wish, during *The Times'* controversy upon the great "swishing" case at Winton, that the *Illustrated London News*, or other pictorial paper, had favoured the public with a woodcut of the actual proceedings in such cases, for we believe it would have been rather astonished by the same. The monitorial schools have the like punishment, it is true, but it is not inflicted publicly. "Nobody can imagine," writes an advocate of their system, "with what feelings of awe and shame our boys regard the flogging-block, not only before, but after they have suffered upon it; they never even allude to it, if allusion can be avoided, among themselves." Yet at the very seminary to which this writer alludes, a match at cricket was got up very recently between two elevens, of "swished" and "unswished" youths.

"It don't hurt," wrote Master Adolphus to his father, from Winton, "half so much as the cane did at Harfield ;

and as for the shame of a swishing, that, at all events, is nothing at all after the first time. The best fun of the thing is to see Gracechurch—(the head master and the most delicate man in the world)—in the execution of this office, which he is known to loathe a great deal more than the victims. He holds the rod, as some one writes, ‘as if it were a lily,’ and spreads it out in its descent like a fan, as though to hide as much as possible of the usually concealed portion of the offender’s person. It is easy enough to get off it once or twice, if you have had a brother or a father here before you. ‘First fault, if you please, Sir,’ was my modest request to the doctor, when I was ‘told to stay,’ for the second time.

“‘Nay, Sir,’ said he, ‘I remember your name down in the list before.’

“‘My father, perhaps, Sir,’ suggested I, very respectfully.

“‘I will look in my book,’ said the doctor. ‘But he never did it.’”

To his mother, as usual, Master Adolphus was very communicative.

“I board at a male dame’s, or dominie’s, as you know, and have a large airy room to sleep in, besides a kind of watch-box, in which I am supposed to construct my Latin verses. I find this place, however, remarkably tight and warm, and prefer to receive Apollo in a room less like a shower-bath, and in a chair less similar to a baby’s. A great monster, of the name of Harris, paid me a visit upon the first evening, and was obliging enough to remain several hours; he engaged himself

during the greater part of that time in flipping my legs with the wetted end of a towel. He was a raw-boned, slouching person, with a voice like the combined efforts of a rookery, and with an intelligence below that of a magpie. He is not in the fifth form, and therefore has not any legal right to flip my legs ; but he does it all the same, and he is such a liar, that when I catch him at my crockery cupboard bagging tea and sugar — (which is, however, a permitted larceny at Winton)—he always protests that they are for Jones, the captain of the horse. I am Jones's seventh fag ; he is fond of setting us all in a line, and running a wicket along our noses, which has destroyed the symmetry, dear mother, of your son's Grecian proboscis. He messes with our second captain, Seton, and the one tells us to do one thing, and the other its contrary, so that their desired object of punching the fags' heads for disobedience is always attainable. These two are holloaing 'lower boy' the whole day long ; a cry which, if unanswered, drives me into my shut-up bedstead ; for when no fag is forthcoming, they scour the house until they find one—and then woe be unto him !

“My tutor is such a jolly fellow ! There is not one of us with a fleeter foot than he, nor can we beat him at either steeple or paper chase. The torrent of invective which he will pour out upon a stupid pupil would be terrible enough, if it were not for the comforting end to which it always runs. ‘Now, confound you, you young dunderhead, I won't stand this any longer, and that's the truth ; you *won't* do these verses yourself, won't you ? And you expect Doctor Gracechurch to do them for you,

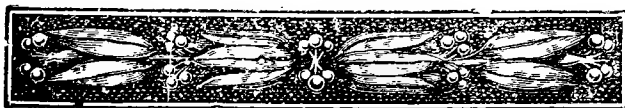
eh? Now, I will have you scourged with fish-hooks,—I will, upon my word and honour, you Sir ; it is picking your father's pocket to keep you here, it is indeed. Let me look at your verses, you stupid dog ;—what is it you want, my good boy,—what is it you want ?' And there-upon he gives us 'sense,'—rough English prose to be translated,—enough to spread over a square mile of Latin hexameters.

"I am sorry to say, that that letter of introduction you sent to Dicky Elms, here, has not done me any permanent good, although I have only myself to blame for it. I breakfasted with his highness only yesterday, but I am afraid I shall never do so any more ; for afterwards, while I was engaged in dazzling people out of my window with a looking glass, a dreadful circumstance happened. There was a little round man, with a very important air, talking in mid-street with a thin, starched one ; the subject was evidently grave and interesting,—probably a scientific one,—therefore surely, thought I, they cannot but be gratified with my simple experiments connected with the solar system. So, first, I caused a little halo to play around their learned heads, and then I brought the brilliant focus right down upon the eyes of the stout gentleman. 'No good, shading them, my fine fellow,' said I, as he put his hand up ; and then I turned the glass on the thin one. They both advanced in a determined manner towards the house, as if to complain of me ; but concluding that they were only townspeople (whom Wintonians are born to despise), I dazzled them all the more. Fancy then my feelings, near-sighted wretch that I am, when, as

they drew near, I recognised in the stout gentleman Dicky Elms, changed from the jovial host of the morning, into the avenger of insulted dignity; and in the other, Mr. Bellairs, the strictest and most severe of the junior masters. For one instant I thought of Doctor Gracechurch, and his pitiless arm,—I heard the swish of that tremendous rod,—and then I rushed despairingly into my shut-up bedstead. Nor did I fear in vain. I could feel now no pleasure in sitting—in the extremely improbable case of his asking me—at Dicky Elms' table, or indeed anywhere else, for days to come."

The life Master Adolphus led at Winton was, upon the whole, a very merry one; but it was excessively short. A near relative of his noble father's (a warrior, who had been concerned in the Walcheren expedition, and other military exploits) was appointed by a grateful country to the Master-Generalship of the Ordnance; and Mr. Hollis was not the man to throw away the advantage of an office of that sort being in the family. A nomination to the Military College at Sandwich, and a private note from the general, promising to "remember Dowb" the younger, in his future career, decided the Wintonian's fate, and he was removed from the public school to one of the "cramming" establishments upon Dimbledon Common forthwith.





## CHAPTER X.

### MR. CANDID'S PUPIL.

**D**URING these years Robert Birt's education was by no means neglected ; although, of course, he had no opportunity of acquiring "the tone." He could write a better hand, and spell better by far than his aristocratic contemporary. Wintonians never can spell—and whatever he did know of arithmetic, geography, and history, by so much was he in advance of Master Adolphus Henry Plantagenet Brooks Hollis, who knew nothing at all. Mineton parish school was a very good school, for Mr. Pluckit was a far-sighted man, knowing what bitter fruit must needs grow upon the trees of ignorance ; and luckily for him, he had but few tenant farmers to deal with in getting subscribed the extra forty pounds a-year necessary to secure that first-rate school-master, Mr. Candid. By him the youth of Mineton were taught not only learning, but the way to teach themselves ; and early as they took to getting their own living at the plough-tail, or in the fishing smack, they knew

how to value afterwards their village library and institute. The Mineton boys were coarser to look at than the young gray coats of Senbury, but—in summer time at least—far cleaner, by reason of their continuous paddling in the brook, or in the sea. Their language, too, was broader than that of the collegians, but it was not one-half so filthy ; and although there was quarrelling enough, and fighting to spare, upon the downland behind the school upon the hill, there were no refinements of tyranny, no fagging and no bullying.

Robert got teased for a week or so, and was nicknamed the parson's pet, on account of the interest which Mr. Pluckit exhibited in him ; but upon that gentleman's wise abandonment of such patronage, the boy got to be a favourite both with companions and master.

A sensible hard-headed self-confident lad he now showed himself to be, who could take a good deal of beating, both physically and intellectually, without giving in, and was the sort of tortoise altogether to run the race of English life against the hares, successfully. We are sorry to say he did not forgive very easily, and there was written within him, in figures that did not grow indistinct with time, a heavy reckoning against—some person or persons unknown—some system very real, but very vague. It was the song of "Gaffer Gray," which he found on Mr. Candid's bookshelf, that first put in words for him his feelings upon this matter ; and he committed the poem, not without some trouble, to memory, omitting, however, the verse about the parson. His heart indeed was a grateful one, although not perhaps very tender, and he did not forget

to write from time to time to Mrs. Hollis (under cover to Mr. Field), assuring her of his well-being and unfailing affection. At the time when Master Adolphus was leaving Winton, she received this letter from her pseudo-adopted son :—

“MOST HONOURED MADAM,

“I have some news for you which I please myself with thinking will gratify you. The master of this school has been elected to the mastership of the district workhouse, and under the new government system has chosen me to accompany him as one of the pupil teachers : I shall, therefore, be no longer a charge—I know not to what extent—upon your liberality (for who, but your kind self, can be the anonymous friend of whom Mr. Field has written?) This, dear Madam, may appear to you but a slight step ; but to me it seems a great one indeed, since I have surmounted it by my own exertions. Mr. Candid, in whose house I have been dwelling, has taken such pains with me as I hope always to remember. By his aid I have learnt some Latin, Euclid, and other things, not usually taught to parish schoolboys, and I hope thereby some day to prove myself worthy of your kindness, by earning myself a position not altogether obscure. I trust the young gentleman, your clever, merry son, is in good health. Believe me, dearest Madam, your most affectionate servant,

“ROBERT BIRT.”

The removal to the district workhouse here spoken of

was indeed a great step for Robert ; the plan of pupil teachers was then in its infancy, and he was amongst the very first of them. Although he, of course, did not experience the bliss of escaping from the workhouse garb (since he had never worn it), and of becoming an individual instead of one of a "fortuitous combination" of red and green atoms, yet the change was pleasant and favourable enough. From a mere parish schoolboy he had become an officer of the establishment, an accredited government official, and had a little bed-room all to himself, and dined with the schoolmaster : this last privilege Robert Birt greatly appreciated. Mr. Candid, the boy felt, was a remarkable and inspiring man ; self-taught as to book-learning, and having experienced very many noughts and crosses since he left North Britain two-score years ago, and came up to London to make his fortune, his conversation was original and shrewd ; with those pent-house brows and steady gleaming eyes of his, he might surely have done better in the world, was the thought of most judges of human nature, who saw him governing a workhouse school. The Board of Guardians—which was divided pretty equally, and wherein a factious but powerful opposition attacked any projected improvement in education, as in aught else—was united in praise of their prudent Scot. The young lady who had charge of the infant department toned down her shrill voice at his approach, and pointing to the green Rebecca at the yellow well, enquired blushfully, "Well, dears, and who was it that married her?" The master himself, after entertaining him at tea, would acknowledge frankly (although pri-

vately and quite to himself), that Candid knew a thing or two. The matron courtesied to him her "good-mornings" and "good-nights" until her keys rattled again. And when he entered the school-room the universal boy rose up and pulled its fore-lock in savage adoration. It was of course by no means so reverential to Robert Birt, but it was not disrespectful: what that young official had to do he did well, understanding his work thoroughly, and the lads acknowledged his fairness and his patience. Here and there a big blundering fellow might think it strange that such a comparatively little chap should exercise lordship over him, but the poor are necessarily accustomed to such anomalies from their birth, and besides, Robert had an advantage in respect of authority over the others in never having been one of themselves. The thing which rescued his position from that unfortunate one of monitor at a public school, was, that no power of physical correction was entrusted to him; he was very properly compelled to keep his boyish hands to himself. There was one other male pupil teacher besides him; and two female ones, who presided over classes of girls, whose highest esteemed privilege, perhaps, was the permission given them to wear their hair long, and to use ribbons in their personal adornment. Like most intellectual members of the fair sex, they never lost sight for a moment of their own good looks; and, indeed, comparing their bright tresses with the cropped heads around them—for the glory of the woman is shorn in district workhouses—and their tolerably gay attire with the blue bibs and coarse apparel of the rest, it was natural enough that the two

girls, of fifteen and sixteen respectively, should consider themselves *distinguées* and striking. Miss Sarah Jones, who was the tallest and the oldest, had intelligent blue eyes and raven hair; and after a little, Robert Birt, who was of about the same age, fell a captive to those dangerous weapons: his was not a passionate boy's love by any means, but a resolute purpose. He saw his way, after his term of service was over, to a workhouse school-mastership of his own, with apartments in the house and an income to marry upon; and when he had obtained that, and not before, he intended to ask Miss Jones to bestow her not altogether lily hand upon him. No fellow of a college, in waiting for a living, could have borne his protracted engagement more philosophically, and yet few could have been more devoted to their beloved object than this boy. He loved her for her intelligence, good humour and beauty; and he loved her because she was an orphan like himself, of his own class, or even lower (he was not sorry for that perhaps), and had thus far made her own way in the world, like him. She kept alive the poetry of his nature, which was of a sort to require external stimulants, and which would certainly have otherwise been speedily asphyxiated in the atmosphere of workhouse life.

The rare occasions when he could get away from the pervading influences of "catechism and bread and butter," and from within those stifling walls into the breezy air and open country, were now, in his eyes, more than holidays; they were days advanced to him, as it were, upon account, by Heaven itself. Heretofore he had spent them, gladly

enough, in trudging over the hills to kind Mr. Pluckit's, but now they melted away, he knew not how, nor did he want to know, in leafy walks and July wanderings (for all was summer to him), with his beloved object. An opportunity presently offered itself for proving his devotion to that young person. He had gone to rest as usual one night in his neat little chamber, and was doubtless peopling his youthful dreams as a lover should do, with endless variations of the charmer—as sylph, or seraph, or at least perfected human female—when he was suddenly awakened by that mysterious hand which, reaching forth from within or from without the sense, warns mortals of a coming peril. Broad awake he was, and at the wind-down in one instant, as though an angel's wing had brushed the pane. How peaceful and how solemn looked that morning's dawn ! “ The breezy call of incense-breathing morn ”—that line the critics do not love, but which charms young hearts, and freshens them as they hear it like the sound of a summer brook,—was piping clear through the stillness : out from the purple light, that fringed the pine-grove upon the eastern hill, a wind arose that rippled all the river's face, and tossed the corn ; laden with autumn fragrance it came through the open casement, and “ shed by ” the young man's hair as might a mother's loving fingers. The universal world seemed full of light and song. What deep delights, what chances perhaps of Heaven itself we sluggards lose ! To be awake and out in summer morn at dawn, is to be first in a new Eden garden, alone with the God of old ! what privilege ! (our Eve has been left safe asleep in the four-poster, and

the serpent himself keeps no such early hours). It seems to be the very first dawn that ever was, and all the villainy of the world to have clean vanished—along with the evil dreams and phantom fears of the night-time—or never to have existed at all. “Let there be light” has just left the Divine lips, and, lo ! a noontide without oppression, an indescribable midday coolness, or, it may be, summer rain, soft falling, gracious, like a sensible blessing upon the heart and stretched-out hands. “The lark can scarce shake out the notes for joy” of his matin hymn ; the nightingale repeats “perchance the self-same song that found a path through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home she stood in tears amid the alien corn ;” and loud, and long, and lovingly she lingers over it.

Robert Birt was not a man much given to devotional feeling, but he could not choose but join his thanksgiving to the universal prayer, until (for we are mortal after all, and subject to all kinds of despicable influences), he began to feel cold in his legs : then he closed the casement, and went to bed again. Still he felt strangely wakeful : the light that would stream in upon him from the fount of day troubled his eyes, so that they smarted sharply : he shut them, but still they smarted, and when he opened them afresh they were dimmed with tears. Was he dreaming, or was it really growing dusk again ? What was this stinging his tongue ? What was this stopping his breath ? “Fire !” shouted Robert, as the truth flashed on him like flame itself ; “fire !” as he rushed out of his chamber door.

The long wooden corridor without was filled with



smoke ; veil-like and thin upon the left hand where the staircase was, but rolling thick and cloudy from the laundry and passage upon the right. Forty boys slept in the next room, and the young pupil-teacher entered it, closing the door behind him to keep out the deadly vapour as long as might be, and woke them one and all, who but for him would have never waked again ; and counted off the whole of them, and saw the last toddling wee thing safe in his little bedgown down the stairs.

Surely, now that all that duty demands is done, the young official will make good use of the brief moments left, to save his own life while he may. But no ! away from the stairs of safety ran Robert Birt ; away into the very thick of the smoke-cloud, past the laundry door through which something worse than smoke begins to flicker and gleam ; away upon his hands and knees, that he may breathe with less difficulty, and on to the women's ward. The doors of the great dormitories are, however, open ; their inmates are up and have escaped ; he might have seen them, a distracted shivering crowd, in the garden without, if he had had the use of his eyes. At present these are fixed upon one object solely, the door of the female pupil-teacher's chamber, the bower of Sarah Jones. She is not awake, nor in safety, his heart is but too sure. Is it hurry or his stupefaction which prevents his opening that door, or is it indeed locked within side ? Yes, locked.

“Sarah ! Sarah ! for God's sake, Sarah awake ! It is I, Robert Birt. Fire ! fire !”

But the girl sleeps on, drugged by the smoke, fascinated already into torpor by the beckoning hand of death.

Right, Robert! ply foot and hand; these chamber doors of district workhouses are not so strong. The panel gives! reach thine arm in, brave boy, and shoot back that almost fatal bolt. Good! There she lies whom your soul loveth, pillowed so daintily, with the raven hair loose over the fair shoulders, that at sight of her you grow faint, and forget, for an instant, that death may obtain the first kiss. Lift her up, young Hercules, wrapping a blanket around those smooth limbs, and carry her back while there is yet time. Alas! there is no time. The smoke in the corridor has now become pitchy dark, and between ye and the staircase the flames lick the walls on both sides. A moment the boy shudders back, for the dream of his youth, the hope of his young heart, seems ended. Now content must he be to die with her; to seal her shut eyes with hot kisses, to cease in her arms. But his mistress, who is aroused by this time, is the more practical; starts up with a cry of "The window!" and throws up the sash. The draught makes the fire perceptibly quicker; the crash and the crackle sound nearer and louder, and from below the folks see the young pair, in relief, with a background of flame.

"Jump! jump!" roars the crowd.

"Stop!" roars Mr. Candid, in a voice above the burning and the shouting, "throw out a mattress first to jump upon."

So the boy, whose head is cool again, throws out that

and some bedclothes carefully, not letting go his beloved, but clasping her still, and then takes the leap with his burthen.

It was a great height, and Robert, who took care to fall clear of his precious Sarah, got his right arm broken. The young lady was unhurt.





## CHAPTER XI.

MISS JONES.

**T**HE fine district workhouse which had cost the ratepayers so much was burnt to the ground in this fire, and there was nothing to put to the credit side of the account whatever. Not a single one of the children had been disposed of,—thanks to Robert,—and the question now arose of where were they to be put. There was a large tumble-down farm belonging to a certain nobleman in the neighbourhood, which the Board of Guardians were glad enough to rent for the present, until a new house, with a detached laundry, should be completed. This farm, therefore, became for a time famous, and one of its inmates, a poor pupil-teacher, with a fever and a broken limb, an object of considerable interest. The pretty girl, too, whom he had saved at the risk of his own life, found her charms to be now universally admitted. She was described in one of the county newspapers as a brunette of exquisite beauty, with a classical *tournure* and elegant *tout ensemble*; it was hinted in

another, that her birth was not altogether obscure, and that the aristocratic cast of her features would be one day satisfactorily accounted for. A correspondent of a London pictorial paper came down express in order to commit that "loveliness beyond cavil" to canvas. She had to relate her adventure to so many people so continually (remembering always to blush at the proper places in the Paul and Virginia manner), that she had positively, she confessed to Robert, scarcely any time at all to bestow upon her preserver; and that he was up and about (although with his arm in a sling) so soon as he was, was owing, after the doctor, to the matron and not to her.

Upon a certain day, when some visitors of quality were at the farm, requiring, as usual, Sarah Jones's attendance, Robert Birt ventured out of doors by himself for the first time. He took his way along a sort of terrace-walk, looking southward over an undulating landscape inexpressibly fair and grateful to a sick man's eyes. As he paced slowly to and fro in the sun, his head and heart together built up many a castle in the air, but yet never absorbed his attention so much as to prevent him casting ceaseless glances towards an old postern gate which led across the orchard from the farm; because it was through that that his love must needs appear when the visitors departed. How surprised and pleased would she be to see him there whom she had left in the sick ward! The pleasure with which he looked forward to this meeting was, however, damped by the knowledge that there were other folks close by. At the end of the terrace was a thick shrubbery of small extent, which led to an old-

fashioned summer-house, and from thence he had heard more than once, as he reached the southern termination of his walk, bursts of suppressed merriment, and voices. Quality folks had, of course, a right to go where they pleased, but the pupil-teacher had certainly the temerity in his heart of hearts to wish they had kept further from his particular neighbourhood. Nevertheless, when the sounds ceased, and a graceful-looking young man of seventeen or so, put aside the thick laurel foliage and stepped out into the orchard, as if to make an observation of the premises, Robert could not help regarding him with considerable interest. He was very tall for his age, it seemed, for though nearly six feet high, there was no trace upon his cheek or lip of the rich brown hair that curled in profusion about his temples. His attire seemed to Robert to be, as indeed it was, in the most perfect taste, and the sick boy,—who at once (as was natural with him) began to make comparisons with the stranger,—could not but admit that the combined efforts of art and nature were more powerful than any which the latter unassisted could make, in his own favour. He happened to be just at this time in that portion of the terrace where two lime-trees grew, and he had stopped mechanically at a spot where they concealed him from the other's gaze.

The stranger, therefore, apparently satisfied by his scrutiny that there was no one near, turned back into the shrubbery with a ringing hearty laugh, and an "All right, my love!" intended for some private ear in the summer-house, but which was distinct enough to any other within

fifty yards. A much lower voice replied ; but, low as it was, as it did so, the knees of Robert Birt were loosened as though by paralysis, and the faint colour which the air and sun had called up into his cheeks paled into deadly white. The next moment, purple with passion, he strode down, as firmly as he had trodden before his accident, into the laurel walk. He met them face to face. The young stranger's right hand was thrown around her waist, his left was clasping hers. "Good-bye : at the same time as usual, love, to-morrow," he was saying; and as he looked up from kissing her, his eyes met those of Robert Birt.

"Who the devil are you, Sir?" quoth the gentleman ; "I see that your arm is hurt, or I would give you a thrashing."

"I am a pupil-teacher here ; my arm was broken in saving that girl from death : she was this morning my affianced wife."

The young man disengaged his hand from the grasp that strove to retain it even then. "Is this true, girl?" said he.

"No," answered the girl, boldly ; "he wants to marry me, but I don't care for him. He saved my life, that is true, and I am sorry for it. I love you, you only, Adolphus."

Adolphus, at this, burst out a-laughing suddenly, and seemed about to speak ; but looked at Robert Birt and stopped himself.

"Don't you think you had better go in, Miss Jones?" said he.

The young lady bowed stiffly and walked leisurely across the orchard and through the postern gate.

"You are a coward and a villain!" cried Robert Birt.

"Nay," answered the other, slightly reddening, "not so. I have done you, if I mistake not, a very great service in undeceiving you about that young person."

"You have ruined a simple girl, you vile dog!" exclaimed the other.

"I?" cried the stranger, laughing in spite of himself, "certainly not; young Lord Courtwell told me of her first, and she was just as fond, after as short an acquaintance, of him; why, even Mydleton—but, there, how should you know?—I tell you that every man who has paid a visit here since the fire has kissed pretty Sally Jones; at least all I know have: she's a——"

"Stop!" thundered Robert. "Gentleman, nobleman, you, and such as you, will burn in hell-fire for this. You have turned her head amongst you; flattered her, lied to her, and you have now no more right to call her shameful names because you have ruined her, than if she had been an idiot. A workhouse orphan! My God, what a victory for your lordships! You have taken away from her the only plea that she had for being considered to be of the same species as your own sister. From a miserably vulgar, not-worth-considering female creature of the lowest order, she has now become not even an honest woman. Now, look you! I thought this girl to be an angel—you know so much and I so little, you see—and you, and these others like you, have destroyed such a hope in this heart of mine as God only knew the great-



ness of, and have made my whole life bitter, to-day and for ever."

The sick boy, who had spoken this with intense energy, here staggered, and, though the other held out his arm for him to hold by, fell, purposely, upon the gravel walk.

"Don't touch me!" he murmured fiercely as he lay, "I will have no help of yours!"

"I am sorry for it, Sir," said the other, gravely, who seemed moved by the lad's passion, "I am truly sorry; if, at some other time, you shall have forgiven me, and may need real assistance, my best help will be at your service. Here is my card."

The stranger lifted his hat, not disrespectfully, to the prostrate form before him, and having sent help to the fainting boy from the farmhouse, saddled for himself a clever chestnut—one of quite a little troop of horse then in the stables, belonging to the quality—and galloped away.

Upon the card which Robert Birt found by his side was printed, "Hon. A. H. P. Brooks Hollis."



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CRAMMING SCHOOL.

**M**ASTER HOLLIS had left Winton for Dimbleton with very high and mighty notions indeed ; he reflected that he was descending from a great estate—the public school—to a position—the private school—which he had long since experienced and risen from ; and, a Cincinnatus returning to his humble plough, he determined to take his dictatorial manners with him. How vulgar looked the white staring villa ! How eminently unclassical the enormous brass-plate, with “Hurry and Cramem” inscribed thereon in Roman characters, upon the door ! On the fluted Corinthian pillars there was a smaller plate, with “House” and “Young Gentlemen’s” bells upon it ; and there was a green board projecting over the garden wall with an academical advertisement on it shocking to the Wintonian mind.

The “house” bell rang up “Jack” immediately, in a disgracefully dirty pink jacket ; the other produced after

an interval, footman John in a chocolate livery and light-blue velvet smalls. Master Hollis saw no signs of a playground, or of his future companions, as he drove up to this edifice; but there were a great many seedily-dressed boys upon the common in front, who divided their attention pretty equally between himself and an old grubseller's hand-cart.

"I have nothing for you, my poor fellows," was almost upon his lips, as these gentry crowded round his vehicle; nor till one of them enquired whether he was the "chap" from Winton, did he comprehend the dreadful truth.

He was a Winton *fellow*, he replied, with a marked stress upon the public school appellation; and further indignities were put a stop to by the arrival of footman John, who, having received and responded to some light chaff respecting his inflammatory appearance and half-adjusted neck-cloth, admitted the new arrival, and shut the door in their faces.

The next proceeding of this functionary was singular enough. Looking Hollis straight in the face as they stood at the bottom of a flight of stairs, he shouted at the top of his voice, "It's only *him*, Sir!" Whereupon a still hoarser stentor responded, "Let him come up then." And thus invited he was ushered into the presence of Joseph Hurry. This gentleman, as he stood to receive his visitor, was rather under than over five feet high, but if there had not been a table between them, which concealed the fact of Mr. Hurry's standing upon a footstool, he would not have seemed nearly of that altitude. His nose was three aquilines rolled into one; never had

Master Hollis beheld such a nose before : those short legs seemed to have been built, and very securely built, on purpose to support that single feature ; he wore, habitually, the largest slouched hats to hide it ; he was constantly wrapping it up in his pocket-handkerchief, yet somehow it always looked supernaturally conspicuous and in relief. His complexion was very fair ; his bright blue eyes, his dazzling teeth, his hair, which was almost white and fine as spun-glass, were faultless. The less creditable characteristics were of course the objects of his pupils' observations, and he was called by the boys—when they knew him to be well out of hearing—Tom Thumb, Nosey, and the Albino.

This man's vulgarity and abruptness of manner were so irrepressible and striking, that he never *showed* to a new pupil if accompanied by any relatives, who were, in that case, received by the presentable partner, Mr. Cramem ; and it was to this circumstance that Master Hollis owed his singular announcement.

Before the piercing and distrustful gaze of Henry Hurry all off-hand manners became submissive, all impudence bashful, and all deceit useless. It was not alone the roving fierceness of his eye, nor the nervous twitching of his lip, nor the scowl that darkened his fair face habitually, as with a curtain ; but the concentrated expression of all these characteristics, joined to what would be in another nature irony or humour, but was, in him, a sort of low cunning and malicious fun, which bent his pupils to his will, and taught them perhaps to hate, but to obey.

“Well, how are you, Master Hollis ? Come from

Winton, I hear. Little taught and less learnt *there*, eh? No Euclid? no mathematics? all the better. I like new ground to work upon, *I* do. If it ploughs up soft, well and good; and if it cuts up rough, why well and good, too, after a bit. What books have you brought with you? Homer? Virgil? Not a mossel of use at Dimbledon; much better let alone. Cæsar? Ah, that's Cramem's business. P'raps he'd like to see you; first door on the left: good-morning. More his sort than mine, I can see, with half an eye."

And having uttered this last soliloquy just as loud as the rest of his rapid harangue, he announced the interview to be concluded by sitting down to write.

Following the direction intimated by the feather of his pen, Master Hollis entered into the presence of the other partner, Mr. Cramem, who sat in an adjoining room. This person was a gentleman, and received him very courteously; he told him at once that he must not expect Wintonian comforts at Dimbledon; that, in consequence—as in his own case—of the pupils not being generally very young, and having to prepare the subjects required for the entrance examination at the military colleges within a limited time, the work would be certainly harder and the system altogether more severe. He smiled at the new boy's enquiry of how many hours of school there were a day, and replied ten, which overwhelmed Adolphus Plantagenet utterly; he smiled, too, when the youth enquired whether he should be under him or Mr. Hurry, and answered that, for the present, Mr. Wilkins would have charge of him. Every word he

spoke seemed to cost him an effort, and he had a listless, absent manner, like that of a disappointed man, as indeed he was. A nominal partner of Hurry's, but always overruled and thwarted, he disliked much of the Dimble-don discipline, without having the power to amend it. Extremely ill-assorted with his colleague, who hated what he openly called his "milky ways," he was often drawn into disputes with him before the boys, in which his opponent's loud talk and vulgar ridicule always got the upper hand.

Cramem, who taught the second class, had a mild and explanatory manner, which, addressed to willing hearers, was very efficacious; while Hurry (who, of course, had the senior boys) was extremely vehement, and left everything "to be hammered out by my fellows, themselves." When one of the former's pupils was draughted into the first class, he was badgered into errors by his new master, eclipsed by his shallow but quick companions, and stigmatised by Hurry as "one of Mr. Cramem's pet gentlemen, whom I always have to begin afresh with." Mr. Wilkins followed suit to Mr. Hurry, and was even still more cruel and unfair. Supposing, however, he had been a Crichton in graceful accomplishments, an angel in temper, and a Newton in intellect, instead of being much more like a swine with a demon in it, he would yet have had serious difficulties to contend against before he could have made a favourable impression. His personal appearance was, indeed, disgusting; and when he pushed, as was his wont, his brambly hair and fat black face over his pupils' shoulders, in order to erase, with a

dingy finger that had just visited his mouth, the toil of weary hours, they became conscious of odours from regions less remote than Araby the Blest.

"I don't consider gin," wrote Master Hollis, in one of the few letters with which he favoured his male parent, "even when at its best, to have a very agreeable perfume; nor is the smell of stale tobacco my favourite scent; but the combination of both of these is mignonette and sweetbriar to the atmosphere which surrounds and emanates from the learned Wilkins: he would speak through his nose, but that the accumulation of snuff (which he takes in enormous pinches, and drops over all his victuals and some of ours) in that magazine forbids such a vehicle of expression, so he contents himself with a twangy growl like bagpipes with a cold in the head."

"I hope, Mistare Hollees, you do know your Euclid," was his first remark upon introduction to that young gentleman; "nothing keeps my boys in after school-time like Euclid: five-and-twenty times they write out every proposition that they fail in, and I do not permit of the use of symbols."

But for this candid explanation, the Wintonian would certainly have supposed Mr. Wilkins' pupils were employed about their ordinary school duties; for upwards of a dozen of them, with layer upon layer of slates before them, were scribbling, as though for the bare life, at the desk over which he presided.

"Yes," continued Mr. W., interpreting the new comer's look of astonishment, "this is a half-holiday, Mistare Hollees, and not schooltime; these are my prisoners,—all

of my class except one, and he is up stairs in bed, ill of the idle fever. This room is warm enough, but two of my young friends, Mistare Turner and Mistare Legion, are going to the lock-up in the garden, which is a little less comfortable."

Yes, there was the Flibbertigibbet of Harfield House, a prisoner and a slave ; and, from the injured-innocence expression of his countenance, not at all interfered with by a momentary wink of recognition, his old friend conjectured him to have fallen upon evil times and a too downy schoolmaster. The new-comer accepted Mr. Wilkins' sarcastic invitation "to see how things were done at Dimbledon," and accompanied the unfortunates to their place of durance, situate in a sort of brickfield with cabbages in it, euphoniously termed "the garden." The lock-up itself was a small square building, divided by a partition-wall into two dens, the furniture of which was limited to a rude desk for the convenience of perpendicular study. It was a bitter cold day, and Hollis felt very indignant at this cruelty, but Legion favoured him with a glimpse of a brandy-flask that peeped forth from his jacket pocket while the jailer was securing his other victim, and observed sanctimoniously that the wind was tempered to the shorn lamb. Certainly no persecuted being was ever more favoured with expedients for evasion and mitigation than was this unfortunate boy ; under pain of the most dreadful penalties he had had a key made to this his oft-frequented bower, and would by that device disport himself at large when thought to be in securest limbo. The means of amusement within doors were also



afforded to him by his fellow-prisoner's assistance, who generally came to grief simultaneously with himself. These juvenile Baron Trencks had loosened a brick or two in the wall, which they took out and replaced at pleasure, and through the aperture thus made they were accustomed to play threepenny cribbage. A slight suspicion of each other's fairness at this game necessitated another hole higher up, where the pack might lodge in sight of both parties; a complexity of arrangement which hindered matters being set right expeditiously, and these Pyramus and Thisbe were at last surprised in consequence, in the very act of their too practical arithmetic.

Turner was merely a myrmidon of Legion's, and had no original genius whatever. Small and stunted as he was, he possessed a certain mastiff-like endurance and fierce tenacity, which a cruel, violent man, such as Hurry, found very difficult to deal with. He would bear a common caning better than any boy in the school, but when he thought he was getting it sharper or longer than was fair — and his quiet sullenness rather provoked such extremities — the performance got to be frightfully interesting.

"Confound you, that's enough!" screamed forth at the utmost power of his lungs, would be the first notice which warned his torturer to desist.

"I'll teach you to talk to me in that manner," was the response that came through the livid lips and set teeth of the Albino.

Then would follow such an encounter as takes place between a vicious horse and a bad-tempered, ignorant

groom. They were about matched in size, but, of course, Hurry was far the stronger, and, except the satisfaction of biting and of pulling whole handfuls of spun-glass from his opponent's head, the boy could do little in return for the most frightful punishment, save use his tongue with the most unscrupulous and libellous freedom.

There were all sorts of reports concerning Hurry's depravities current among the boys ;—that he beat his wife and starved his children were amongst the milder of the characteristics attributed to him ; and certainly the domestic disclosures which Turner while under punishment was apt to make before the whole school, were anything but improving to listen to. Eventually the boy would be borne off to the lock-up, where, with his fiendish howlings, he was wont to wake, not only the echoes, but an old invalid lady about ten doors off, who did not improve Hurry's temper on these occasions, by sending in “her best compliments, and she would be glad to know who was being beat to death.”

Young Hollis found a hardier lot of boys at Dimble-don than he had met with at either Harfield or Winton ; hardier, not indeed for play, but for work. The study hours, though nominally confined to ten, generally extended to twelve or fourteen ; and arrears of mathematics would constantly keep the unfortunate scholar a prisoner even upon the weekly half-holidays ; while, except upon those afternoons, and upon Sundays, there were seldom more than a dozen, out of the sixty who composed the school, who ever got out at all. The schoolroom, though sufficiently spacious, being lit with gas at night, and always

having defaulters for work imprisoned in it, was an unhealthy dwelling place ; and when we remember that the said victims were kept plentifully supplied by their emancipated companions with toffee and cocoa-nut (the principal merchandise of the grubman), it seems wonderful that there should be so many rickety adults left alive as there really are, to bear us witness of the life we describe at Hurry and Cramem's.

Norman, the boy who was always being locked up in his room by Mr. Wilkins, to cure him of the "idle fever," was in reality dying there ; so that even Hurry, touched by his weakly looks, confined his annoyances to the remark, that Mr. Norman seemed "much too delicate to live anywhere but under a cucumber frame."

Bad as the cramming system however is, much of the evil is almost irremediable ; it is impossible for a boy to begin in his fifteenth year at the beginning of the mathematics,—as Hollis had to do,—and acquire in another twelvemonths sufficient knowledge to pass even the entrance examination at Sandwich, unless he is made to work during that interval much more intensely than is either healthy or profitable. At a school contiguous to that of Messrs. Hurry and Cramem, it was the custom for the boys to bring their mathematical books in to dinner with them, to be read at any interval which might occur during the repast. That crammed knowledge never lasts is an admitted fact ; but it cannot be expected that preparatory masters should say so ; or refuse, like donation hospitals, all hopeless cases. Hurry had a way of treating such, *after* he had done what he could for

them,—and very violent measures he had to use sometimes,—which was eminently characteristic. “Now, you Sir,” he would say, just as the boy addressed was going in for examination at the college, “I wash my hands of you from this moment; from the day when you first came to Dimbledon, I told your parents that it was not a morsel of use for them to keep you here. An idle dog is bad enough, Sir; but a stupid idle dog, no man can make either head or tail of.” If, however, as sometimes happened, the pupil succeeded in getting a good place upon the list, then Hurry had always prophesied it,—knew it from the very beginning. “Gad, Sir, you are the sort of willing horse that it is a pleasure to drive.” And he generally had driven him, literally enough, and with a very liberal allowance of whip-cord.

The light-hearted, liberty-loving Wintonian did not like any of this at all. The first tender mercy of Mr. Wilkins was the setting the boy to learn the definitions and first proposition of Euclid,—“just to let you down easy, Mistare Hollees,” said the twangy grunt; and never having seen that volume before, he of course learnt how to describe an equilateral triangle right off by heart, with its *a*, *b*, *c*, letters, without understanding a word of it. What, then, was his horror, upon taking his place in the class, to find a distorted object, upside down and all *x*’s and *y*’s awaiting his demonstration. Expressing disbelief in this appearance, and the most total ignorance of it, if it were real, Adolphus Plantagenet was at once conducted by the learned Wilkins, who seemed to be quite as much jailer as preceptor, to a bed-room above stairs, and there left

with an injunction "to read to the Pons Asinorum." The young aristocrat was ruffled, and replied that he preferred reading to himself; and that little joke made the man his mortal enemy. Upon the charitable, but very improbable, supposition, that Mr. Wilkins did worship *something*, his Fetish was most certainly Euclid—Dr. Rutherford's edition, not symbolical—and he resented anything like fun being made of it accordingly. That was the only subject upon which the twangy grunt discoursed with clearness, and the one engaging topic which could arrest those dingy fingers with the precious pinch of "black-guard" upon their nasal road.

Dangerton, the other usher, was a very different fellow from Wilkins,—probably, indeed, different from any other being upon the earth's surface; he was an extremely learned person, and (not averse to let folks know this) enriched with Greek and Latin sentences his angriest speeches, when a look sufficiently appreciatory on the part of the offender was as oil upon the face of the troubled waters. In consequence of that dim acquaintance with the classics which even a fourth-form Wintonian may possess, Hollis became a great favourite with Mr. Dangerton. "Wintonians," observed he, "were gentlemen;" a title which he seemed by no means inclined to grant to the youth of Dimbledon. His head was thinly bristled over with short grayish hair, to which the circumstance of his habitually using it as a penwiper gave the appearance of an ineffectual dye. He had a large wife, and a quantity of children, living in a cottage close by, and, doubtless, no very magnificent remunera-

tion from Mr. Hurry; but still no possible necessity for saving could have excused the coat which he invariably wore in school hours. He informed Hollis, in confidence, that it had been originally green, and instanced something like an autumnal leaf in that portion of it upon which he generally sat, in proof of this; indeed, his whole garb had grown, through continual patching, to resemble a faint rainbow, compared to which Jacob's coat of many colours was "quiet." Quite aware of its extreme shabbiness, Mr. Dangerton would remark, that, thank Heaven, his coat did not make the man; whereto Hollis used to rejoin, *sotto voce*, that, thank Heaven, his man (whereby, he meant his tailor) did not make the coat.

Preston, an amusing clever boy, but a tremendous liar, persuaded the Wintonian to join a nice little club to which he himself belonged, composed of the *élite* of Dimbledon; and Hollis subscribed his half-a-crown a-week to the "Dimbledon Swigging Association" accordingly. Its object was the gathering together of eight young gentlemen, in a confined space, usually appropriated to book-boxes and other lumber, to drink spirits and water upon Sundays and school festivals. Hollis found himself upon the very next evening, in this six-feet-by-five apartment, imbibing Scotch whiskey with enthusiasm and affected relish, in company with seven companions. If a chimney on fire had been rendered liquid and bottled off, he would not have enjoyed it in reality much less than this "Superior Dew from Ben Lomond." The fear of opening his mouth in the school-

room afterwards lest he should be smelt, and the fear of keeping it shut, lest he should perish by spontaneous combustion, as he had read of in "Peter Simple" and other tales, combined, on this occasion, to make him form a steadfast resolve, never, for the future, to touch this spirit; and he kept it very religiously—and drank gin thenceforth instead.

These little festivities becoming in due time to be suspected, Mr. Cramem desired that the keys of all the book-boxes should be delivered up. Preston, who was the President of the Society, had no less than fifteen bottles of "the Dew" in his deal cellaret; Elliot, a weak-minded youth, the Secretary, had in his about as many empty ones: and as both these posts (especially the former) had been sought as honourable distinctions, and, moreover, as these two officers must needs be "twigged," it was judged unnecessary to reveal anything connected with the club at all. Preston, upon his treasures being exposed to view, insisted that "it was all eau-de-cologne, sent to him from abroad by his sister." Elliot relied for proof of his own innocence upon the emptiness of his bottles; but both pleas were disallowed; and the culprits were forthwith shut up in separate apartments, in readiness for an examination, which, Hurry declared, should "get what little truth might be there out of both their carcasses."

Legion—who, strange to say, had nothing to do with the society, but who was burning to have an interest in this matter—must needs station himself opposite the prison window of poor Elliot, upon whose constancy

there was felt no great reliance, to terrify him into silence by the exhibition of threatening placards. The victim happened to be very sensitive to public opinion, and did not need the extraneous aid of pink letters on a blue ground to the notice, "If you sneak, you'll be sent to Coventry," to cause it to sink deep into his memory. To Legion, however, it was an unspeakable comfort to manufacture these posters, with one of which,—and a particularly inflammatory address it happened to be,—he was caught by Hurry, and made prisoner No. 3, as accessory after the fact. But all three proved to the end as staunch as Spartans.

Upon a certain occasion, the Black List— a note-book wherein were entered the impositions and arrears of each unfortunate—was abstracted and destroyed. Each boy was asked in turn, upon his honour, whether he knew anything about it, and each boy denied that he did ; this judicious plan, which (as may well be imagined) was Mr. Hurry's own particular one, having thus failed, he decreed that all half-holidays should be stopped unless the offender was discovered in half-an-hour. Upon this, lots were drawn amongst the boys for who should "give up," and the fatal number fell upon the one least likely to be guilty of all the school. Poor Norman had to own to the theft, and to bear the punishment. Certainly the inculcation of morality was an extra at Mr. Hurry's establishment. This gentleman always compelled the lad who chanced to break a window in the school-room to pay three times its value: first, for the value of the glass; secondly, for the wickedness of the act; and thirdly, for the inconveni-



ence occasioned to Mr. Hurry himself, although this last indeed was greatly mitigated by the device of condemning the offender to stand, during all the school hours, upon a stool with his back to the broken pane, so as entirely to fill up the orifice, until it was mended.

There had been a great deal of gambling going on in the school; the result, doubtless, of continued confinement within doors,—and Hurry was determined to “put it down.” Each boy had a small private cupboard, or locker, allotted to him upon his arrival, entirely for his own use and benefit; and these *sacra privata* the Albino announced one day his intention of violating, in order to discover implements for gaming. Great was the tumult and disgust at this announcement; the box business had been considered bad enough, as an unwarrantable intrusion, but this ravaging of the very places consecrated by his own authority, was a bit of double-refined burglary such as public feeling revolted against. Some refused to surrender their keys, point-blank; others confined themselves to the assertion that they had lost theirs a day or two ago; Turner only (under Legion’s direction) immediately gave up his Chubb’s Patent, with the indignant avowal that he was ashamed of none of his property. Hurry, in reply, assured the boys that they need not disturb themselves, inasmuch as he had a master-key to every locker in the place; but as Mr. Turner seemed so very anxious to prove himself virtuous, he would open his first. This was the last cupboard, No. 60, upon the ground-floor, and in a very dark corner; and directly “Nosey” had opened it, a sharp, quick noise was heard,

as of a rat-trap falling ; it did not, unhappily, catch the prying fingers, but it made the little man jump up as if he had been shot, and hit his head sharply against the neighbouring desk. Moreover, their being nothing in the cupboard but the trap, his first investigation partook of the nature of a “sell” or failure ; it turned out that Legion rented this locker of Turner entirely for sporting purposes, and hence the admired result, which, however, did not make Mr. Hurry better tempered with what he found elsewhere.

The individual character of each boy could have been augured well enough from the contents of their respective lockers. Those of the good boys were filled with books, carefully covered in brown paper, and with slate pencils kept in neat cases, which in less well-regulated cupboards were used as tobacco-pouches. Legion, whose chattels were crowded with those of Turner into one department, had really no room for anything contraband beyond a cigar-case ; and that, by begging Mr. Hurry not to show it to the boys, and by putting himself into the most absurd attitudes, he endeavoured to persuade the little man was only a *gage d'amour*, not by any means meant for practical purposes. Preston, however, had a cupboard full of unlicensed goods ; half-a-dozen odd volumes from the circulating library,—and novels at Dimbledon, such was the constant necessity for study there, were burnt as soon as discovered, besides entailing an imposition upon their possessor,—dice, tobacco, and cards, for the possession of each of which he had excuses, varying from the specious to the barely possible. The novels

were of a religious character, and had been recommended to him by his mother ; the dice were to play backgammon (the board had been mislaid) in very, very bad weather indeed ; the cards (two packs of them) he had bought to illustrate that beautiful problem of Mr. Hurry's, regarding the number of hands that could be dealt to four people in ten years ; and so on. But when, from the inmost corner and recess of this emporium, was drawn forth a complete "crib," a verbatim copy of the said Hurry's own mathematical "answer book," with the key of each difficult problem therein worked out at fullest length ; then, even the inventive Preston had nothing more explanatory to state, than, that though things seemed against him, if a private interview were only granted to him by Mr. Hurry, he (Preston) would explain everything to his satisfaction.

It is not to be supposed that the chief investigator was pursuing his researches all this time with philosophic quiet ; stamping and screaming at this and at that, slamming back the little doors ferociously, and grinning over the heaps of confiscated property, after the manner of some fortunate pirate, he seemed to have attained all the felicity of which his nature was capable. If he could but have punished every boy whom he had found guilty, he had been happy indeed ; but the anger of the school was fairly roused by this unwarrantable scrutiny, and as Cramem declared for moderation, Mr. Hurry was forced to content himself with setting the misdeeds of each lad down in his memory, to be repaid with interest upon the very next offence.

Sundays, instead of being days of rest at Dimbledon, were principally devoted to getting up arrears of work ; the procession to church was, indeed, the only outdoor exercise which the pupils of Messrs. Hurry and Cramem could count upon with certainty, throughout the week. The chapel the boys attended was a fashionable one, and had many private carriages in waiting at its porch, but only one fly, which came on speculation upon wet days, and was always striven for by a couple of old maids who lived next door to the school. As they confiscated the balls which broke their green-house windows, and complained repeatedly of the mortality among their cats, they were considered as enemies, and harassed accordingly by the young guerillas ; to rush out of church even with somewhat unseemly haste, and obtain possession of this fly, was a great delight to Masters Hollis and Legion ; while to direct the driver "to go slow," in the hearing of those unfortunate females, who had requested it to return for them, was repayment in full for any punishment an absence from the school ranks might entail. Few others ventured to indulge in this amusement, for the terror which Hurry inspired in almost every heart was supreme ; his own class even never quite got rid of it, while the feelings of the junior forms, when he sometimes announced his intention of "changing for a day or two, and seeing how the young ones were getting on," were perfectly agonising. The abrupt question, the impatience manifested in every feature, the glittering eye that was upon every face in the circle in the same instant (and woe to the inattentive and the careless when that

"Silence ! now *you*, Sir ! *you* go on," broke forth,) and last, but certainly not least, that omnipresent cane, pointing, chastising, emphasising, and twitching about in all directions like some electric live thing ; all these most utterly destroyed that concentration of thought upon the subject before them which was so indispensable to their personal safety. To his own pupils he was very communicative, but he very rarely told the truth. "I say, So-and-so, your friends are writing to me very earnestly about you ; I hope you are getting on, eh ?" whereas, as we have said, all correspondence with parents was carried on by Cramem only. Once he informed Preston very gravely, that his (Preston's) father, who had been dead ten years before and more, was "extremely anxious about his getting into the sixth book of Euclid before Easter," and had written to him to say so.

"I believe he is, Sir," replied the boy, who could lie with even a greater coolness than his master.

Adolphus Plantagenet owed his immunity from punishment to the recent death of his uncle, Lord Rexham ; for a live honourable and heir apparent to a peerage being rather a scarce article at Dimbledon, was of course treated accordingly. Savage, in truth, must be the breast of that Briton for whom a title has no charms ; and the gener bluntness of Mr. Hurry's character by no means prevented him from continually asking after "his lordship's health" before the school, and begging to be remembered to that nobleman, whenever his son should be writing.

Few, indeed, are the English schoolboys so altogether

“mild” and “sappy,” as to take no interest in the Epsom Derby. At Hurry and Cramem’s there was a perfect *furor* prevalent all the race week; the faintest gleam of intelligence, the idlest hearsay of the trusty John, — who was the great oracle upon all sporting matters, — was gleaned and garnered before the great event; while afterwards the faith with which the “Portraits of the Winner” were received, extended from those by Mr. Herring in *Bell’s Life*, down to the prints on the illustrated pocket-handkerchiefs.

“I say, by Jove, *Argus* says it will be about a dead heat between ‘Narcissus’ and the ‘Artful Dodger.’ Wouldn’t I like to go! wouldn’t it be just prime fun, that’s all!” observed the Hon. Adolphus to Master Preston, upon the night before the race.

“I believe you, screaming,” replied the other; and then, encouragingly, “To-morrow’s a half-holiday; why not make it a whole one—shirk dinner and take our chance to be in by seven o’clock school? Let us do it; Hurry dare not expel *you*, because you are a nob; and we must be punished equally, so *I’m* safe. Have you got any tin, though?”

The Hon. H. A. P. B. Hollis had one-and-fourpence in his pocket. Preston had a good deal of money in his possession, because he was the treasurer of the cricket club, but it was not of course his own property. He borrowed from that fund, however, what he considered to be sufficient for their expenses, and the trusty John procured a post-chaise to be in readiness the next morning behind the house. After ten o’clock school was over,

and nothing having occurred to hinder them, off they started at full gallop for the Derby.

The postboy, upon reaching the course, became exceedingly exorbitant, and left the lads but fifteen shillings between them to make merry with ; so that many of Mr. Preston's schemes (which were all of great magnificence) had to be abandoned altogether. He had intended "to have picked up a fiver or two in the ring," he said ; and his intimate knowledge of the game of *rouge-et-noir* would have been sure to have proved a fortune to them. He would be safe to see a cousin who would "hang" them "out" a champagne lunch, and he knew one of the stewards very intimately, who would procure them seats in the judge's box, with pleasure. But now, unfortunately, these splendid prophecies were doomed never to be realised ; the admission to the grand stand and ring was too expensive for the slender finances of the young couple. Master Preston lost two half-crowns out of their remaining six at the very game with which he was so familiar. His cousin never turned up throughout the day, nor did the champagne luncheon ; and the man who was pointed out by the young gentleman to his companion, as being his intimate ally, the steward, was subsequently seen taking return tickets at an outlet of the betting inclosure. However, they consumed "'am and beef" sandwiches, and drank bottled porter in plenty, besides seeing through tall men's elbows about a horizontal foot of the great race, so that they enjoyed the Derby very much after all. All went well until the very last, when the extortionate postillion flatly refused to take

them back again without more ready money ; what he had been paid, he said, was for coming to Epsom, not for returning from it, nor could the most gorgeous promises from Preston, nor the most abusive language from Hollis, move him a hair's breadth from that position.

The lads' united stock was now but five shillings, and they determined to make it go as far as possible. London stout had given them confidence, not to say recklessness ; and they swung themselves up behind a barouche and four with so much energy that Preston's pockets, which were crammed with wooden dolls, lemons, and pincushions, fairly burst with the exertion, and all those spoils of the knockemdowns rolled unheeded in the dust. Their high position was rendered far from comfortable by some huge iron teeth which garnished the footboard, while descent was put out of the question in consequence of a stage coach being close behind, the pole of which ran into them from time to time, as it was, with considerable violence. Crouching down so that they should not be seen above the head of the barouche, and exposed to these various unpleasanties, the schoolboys nevertheless were far from being despondent. Presently they had the satisfaction of listening to some conversation that was not intended for their ears.

"There's another five thousand gone the way of the bad to-day I hear," remarked a quiet voice from some unseen person within the barouche.

"I am very glad to hear it," replied an indignant female organ in reply ; "at least," it pursued, checking



itself, "I should be, if it were not for his wife's sake, and the boy's."

"His lordship looked and laughed after the race, however, as if he had been little punished," said the first voice.

"Yes ; we women are well aware that betting is one of those crimes for which expiation is generally made by other than he who commits it," replied the second. "It is one of the sins that is visited upon the second and third generation."

"How does her unfortunate ladyship bear all this?" enquired a third person.

"She knows nothing about it," answered the second ; "and if she did know, she could do nothing to stop it."

"Excuse me," said the first, "but she could though ; for it is her money, and her son's, which is producing these little independencies for the gentlemen of the ring, and not his lordship's."

"Sir Charles," remarked the second voice very gravely, "it is my belief that if she dared to move in such a matter, my dear cousin would murder her. The older he gets, the worse he gets in every respect. There is no more spirit-broken, deserted, injured woman upon God's earth at this moment than our old friend Lady Rexham."

Young Hollis slipped down from the footboard without a word, and as though there were no four plunging horses rampant to tread him into dust behind him, and Preston followed his example. The former had recognised Sir Charles Lester and Lady Beebonnet from the very first by their voices and had intended to give them a sur-

prise, but the surprise had now come from the other party. It is certainly an imprudent thing to listen to the conversation of unconscious friends, under any circumstances; even from behind the head of a barouche.

Hollis was angry with his father, whom he did not love, sorry for his poor mother, sorry for himself when he heard all this; but his chief annoyance lay in the fact that Preston had been a listener to these domestic revelations also.

"You will say nothing about this, old cock?" observed Adolphus, in a tone of pathos.

"Nothing, upon my soul, Dolly," replied the other, with all the fervour of youthful friendship; and indeed he was not arrived at that age when the family misfortunes of our acquaintances become pleasing or even interesting to us.

This comforted the boy. Presently, after two hours' walking, they found a hansom cab, the driver of which undertook to take them to Dimbledon upon tic. They, therefore, treated this Samaritan and themselves to drink to the extent of their remaining capital, and somehow forgot to depart from the hostelry until nine o'clock. At ten o'clock, at Dimbledon, footman John retired to rest as usual, but Mr. Cramem sat up for the truants in his study. At eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, the door-bell began tolling as though for evening prayers. Outside, Mr. Preston was heard to quaver a most dismal chant with the gayest words, announcing his intention of not going home till morning, and Mr. Hollis, who was not usually musical, to join in at intervals. Mr. Cramem,

descending in dressing gown and slippers, thus apostrophised them in the most ironical tone that can be conceived.

"Well, gentlemen, I hope you enjoyed yourselves at the Derby to-day."

"Thank you, Sir, prime," replied Master Hollis, who was not in a condition to appreciate sarcasm; "and I hope you did not lay your money upon Blueblazes, Sir, for he had not the shadow of a chance."

"There aint any cold meat in the house, is there, Sir?" enquired Master Preston. "I don't mind it being cold at all, Sir, being so late; do you, Hollis?"

"Not if we have pickle," responded that young gentleman. The youthful pair were certainly very, very drunk.

"To-morrow, gentlemen, to-morrow you *shall* have pickle," exclaimed Mr. Cramem with emphasis. And, indeed, the next day was made a very unpleasant one for both of them.

It is not to be supposed that, because the Hon. Adolphus got so soon (to all appearance) over the discovery of his father's extravagance and of his mother's misery, that he was a cold-hearted boy at all; he was indeed quite the reverse of that, and had a disposition affectionate as well as genial; but he disliked even the contemplation of an unpleasant matter, wherein he was powerless to effect any good; and being satisfied of this, his elastic spirits recovered themselves from the shock of the painful news at once. What had he to offer (so he reasoned) to his beloved mother, save sympathy and tears. And he could not present her with them satisfactorily until he saw her.

As for seriously tackling the governor upon a question of his personal expenditure, the young Adolphus would like—so he vulgarly expressed his thoughts in confidence to himself—to see himself at it. He had now and then asked for pocket money of Lord Rexham, who either gave it him profusely in sovereigns, or refused, with many oaths, to give him a single shilling, just as his lordship happened to be himself flush of money or otherwise; but to remonstrate with that nobleman upon his extravagances, in the character of his heir-at-law, was another matter. Dolly was a bold boy; but he shrank from that experiment with discreetness. Moreover just at this time the long expected entrance examinations at the military college were close at hand, and not only did the increased work which is done at the cramming schools at these junctures take up all his leisure, but the contemplation of the change about to befall him usurped his thoughts. This was a very different business from a mere shifting from one school to another. Sandwich was, at that period, not only a college where boys got to be men at once, wore uniforms, and became actual soldiers, subject to the articles of war, but it was also, perhaps, the very worst conducted institution in Christendom. The newspapers,—nay, Parliament itself was bringing charge after charge against it, each one more disgraceful than its predecessor; and the cadets themselves (through *Paterfamilias*) were astounding a respectable public by home revelations in their vacation time. Occasionally, some of the old Dimbledon boys would appear in martial array at Hurry and Cram-em's, and take away the breath of the younger aspirants

to glory by relating the sufferings that were in store for them at the college, as soon as they should join. Young Hollis little knew that that mother whose sufferings he could so easily forget had been more than once upon her knees before his father, to entreat that her boy should not be sent to this place that all men were speaking ill of, and had been repulsed, upon the last occasion, by his lordship's foot. No boy can guess how dearly his mother loves him ; no mother guesses how her boy loves himself. Master Hollis's thoughts during the three weeks preceding his examination were exclusively occupied upon one Master Hollis ; on whether the place was really so vile a hole as some said ; whether there was indeed such fun to be got in it as others related ; and finally, on whether, upon the whole, he should do his best to "get through" the coming ordeal, or if it would be better (that is, pleasanter) for him to get himself plucked on purpose. Master Adolphus Henry Plantagenet Brooks Hollis was indeed a very clever boy.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE MILITARY COLLEGE.

**T**HE inns in Sandwich were pretty well crowded with candidates upon the night before the examination. The cramming schools of Greenhurst, and of Sandwich itself, prepare even a greater number of pupils for the Military College than those of Dimbledon, and upon this particular occasion there were some forty youths, each desirous of filling one of fifteen vacancies ; Legion, Preston, and six others, were the only school companions of Hollis, and he hoped for their success at least as devoutly as for his own. As it happened, no particular friend of his was at that time an old cadet, and the Military College was not a pleasant place to be in without allies. Hanborough, an ancient Dimbledonian, was there indeed ; but so far from that gentleman's heart being drawn towards his schoolmates, he had expressed upon his last visit to Hurry and Cramem's his intention of taking the " cursed facetiousness " out of Preston (who

had imprudently raised a laugh at his expense), upon the very first opportunity.

Hollis had at the same time lent Hanborough two sovereigns, with the sole intention, it must be confessed, of retaining his good offices for the future, never imagining, clever boy as he was, how bitter a foe such an obligation sometimes produces. Legion was perhaps the only one of all the forty who looked forward to wearing his Majesty's uniform with satisfaction, a lad to whom the Tocomé seemed always promising, and the Present never unbearable.

Time was to him what wine was to the experienced philosopher — no times were bad, although some times were not so good as others. One young fellow, of the name of Stanhope, who had intended to have sat up all night to read, was regaled instead by anecdotes of the Military College, founded on fact, but made piquant by the luxuriant fancy of their narrator, Preston. As he told of the poor "last joined" who was hung out of window naked in the cold December night, Stanhope's teeth began to chatter from mere sympathy ; as he enlarged upon the fat cadet whom the corporals had bound to the iron fender in front of the fire, and left there, through inadvertence, until he was roasted to death, the listener got into so great a perspiration that he had to throw open the window.

"The first thing they do, I am told," remarked the ingenious improvisatore, "is, however, to chuck us into the bathing pond with all our clothes on."

"But I cannot swim," groaned the wretched boy.

“That doesn’t the least matter; we shall be all equal in that respect, for they take the previous precaution of tying everybody’s hands.”

When the candidates assembled in the college hall next morning, there was one chance against them the less, their number being reduced to thirty-nine, in consequence of George Anthony Stanhope not answering to his name. He had given up the profession of arms at the very outset, and is now a peaceful country gentleman in Wiltshire, producing better picotees and pinks at the annual flower-shows than any other cultivator of garden soil.

The cadets crowded round outside the great hall door, some of them exchanging friendly greetings with the new comers, but the majority evincing rather a lack of courtesy by shying at them, whenever they had the opportunity, small but compact racket balls, aimed with a singular precision. As for the examination itself, it required no great wits to pass it creditably; and the only real obstacle to Hollis was the printing, which formed a separate branch of study of itself, and required more dexterity of hand than he could boast of. The Latin, which only extended as far as Cæsar’s Commentaries, was of course easy enough to the Wintonian; and the French was rendered more familiar to him by the fact of the examining master being the same Monsieur Devigny who instructed him in that language at Dimbledon,—he who used to confiscate all marbles, pictures, and cigars, discovered during study hours, declaring that he “Deed not care for dem heemself, not he, but that he had a leetle girl *chez lui*, a leetle child, and she did care for dem;” a confession,



considering he was a bachelor, peculiarly national, and very acceptable to the boys. Herr Vandergangen, the German professor, was also an old friend; he had a nervous habit of poking the fire as soon as he entered the schoolroom in winter time, of which not even the perpetual heating of the poker handle by Master Legion could ever disenchant him. Hollis used to copy all his exercises from the latter young gentleman, and was so entirely ignorant of the German caligraphy as upon one occasion to add the real owner's name to his borrowed production as well as his own, under the impression that that was a part of the theme; but Vandergangen "passed" him this time, as did all the other professors. He was declared the second of the fortunate fifteen; the first boy,—we beg the pardon of one of his Majesty's Regiment of Gentlemen Cadets,—the first "passed" man was Ludin, a conceited but inoffensive lad, with a taste for the fiddle and other musical instruments. Legion, Preston, and three other of the Dimbledon boys also got through; Preston last of the batch; these newly-elected youths joined the college almost immediately. They were called by the oldsters "something snookers;" after the first term they were "snookers" without the expletive; after that they were simply "neuxes" like all the others, who were neither "old cadets," nor "corporals." An "old cadet" was, as his name implies, a cadet of considerable standing, and that meritorious fact endowed him with the right of ill-treating without limit any of the juniors; the "corporals" were under-officers selected by the authorities from the old cadets, and who had thus a sort of

double right divine to govern wrong. It was the monitorial system hideously exaggerated : power, almost to the extent of life and death, nay more, to that of dishonour and degradation, put into hands totally unworthy and unfit to wield it.

Lord Rexham had pressing hunting engagements which prevented him from accompanying his son on his admission to Sandwich ; but he sent his carriage and four (and his wife in it), along with him instead. She would have much preferred going in a more quiet manner ; but her husband insisted upon an impression being made upon the regiment of gentlemen cadets and their commanders, of the power and nobility of the house of Hollis. If he could by any means have blazoned the fact of its relationship to the Master-General of the Ordnance it might have been of some service ; but the only result that actually flowed from the expedition was, that Master Adolphus, so soon as the four horses' heads were turned the other way, was led out into the parade ground by an old cadet and bidden to "talk like a lord," under pain of corporal punishment. This was after the parting between him and his mother, of course. How she clung to him and kissed him, but never sobbed nor wept, because she felt that there were cold alien eyes upon them both, and cruel hearts close by that had no room for love like hers. Thin she looked and pale, despite the fever flush of that tearless "good-bye." Smile upon her, reassure her, selfish boy—her grief is greater than thine. Be not ashamed to return that last embrace ; cling to her, kiss her, for the time is drawing near when thou shalt be

motherless. She shed one appealing smile from her sweet face upon the throng about the hall-door, where she had left her son, and leaning on the arm of the governor of the college stepped hastily towards her carriage. One lean dark countenance attracted her upon the way by its cruel sneer. "Who is that young man yonder, general?" said she; "he with the gold upon his arm?"

"Hanborough, my lady," replied the old soldier carelessly; "one of our heads of rooms."

The Hon. Adolphus had lent this gentleman, as has been said, two pounds, and his heart was filled with all the malignity of a debtor; his nature was one of those terrible ones which is positively embittered by kindness, and made more ruthless by non-resistance. Impervious to friendship, he was nevertheless popular among the old cadets, for he could make wicked jokes, and sing infamous songs, and possessed a fund of savage spirits almost inexhaustible. He was the president of a little social gathering then extant at the Military College, called "The Atheist Club;" but which was subsequently dissolved, the story runs, in consequence of a certain diamond pane of glass falling, contrary to calculation, inwards, into the room in which they sat. Eleven of them, it is said, were found one early morning by the college servants in astonished conclave, with white faces and dumb mouths, very sorry that they had ever tried their hands at the suppression of Providence.

Hanborough was not a coward in the ordinary sense of that term,—with which recommendation all praise of him, even negative praise, must needs cease,—but he was not

indifferent to his individual safety, by any means. When the laws of the college had to be flagrantly violated in order to afford him some indulgence, he always used a "neux" for a catspaw ; as for giving himself up in case of the involuntary offender being discovered, he never dreamt of such a thing. If the young victim were even expelled for the crime, what was that to Hanborough ? If punished in a lesser degree, the old cadet would increase his misery by a tremendous thrashing for his stupidity in getting discovered. He was wont, it is said, to compel such "neuxes,"—and very few they were,—who evinced feelings of a religious character, to call the servants who waited at table in hall by the most sacred names which he could call to mind ; and upon one occasion he placed a coal-scuttle upon his head by way of crown, and insisted upon the act of worship being performed to him by several "last joined."

It was Hanborough who sent to Ludin, upon the very first evening of his arrival, to tell him to come and play in the college band. Ludin had told some of his batch, rather conceitedly, that he was a good musician ; and the college band was in need of recruits. The boy had been brought up at a school a long distance off, which sent scarcely any pupils to Sandwich, and he was in blissful ignorance of what sort of a place it was. He replied to Hanborough's message that he was tired that night, and that he had not made up his mind about joining the band at all.

The "neux" who carried this cartel of defiance back had scarce the courage to deliver it, and even the rest of

the "last joined" of the "something snookers," knew enough to make them tremble at the audacity of their companion. The new arrivals had been mercifully billeted at first apart from the rest; but Hanborough and another old cadet came to the room which Hollis with his two Dimbledon friends and Ludin occupied, and dragging the latter out of bed punished him frightfully. They were too angry at the time to refine their cruelty; so they simply beat him wherever they could with their leathern belts. He was so sore and bruised the next morning that he could scarcely stand, and was obliged to "fall out" from drill, from sheer agony.

The officer on duty enquired what ailed him, but he gave an evasive answer. Whatever he was, he was no sneak; and his conduct in not "peaching" would, at any other place but the Military College, have met with some appreciation. Upon the next night this poor fellow was beaten still more abominably, hung up by the heels, set upon a considerable eminence formed of the high stools used in the dormitories, and knocked therefrom with boot-jacks and other missiles. From the severe injuries then received he had to be taken down to hospital, and remained there for six weeks in comparative peace.

What a benevolent and thankworthy institution was that place of pain and disease to many a bullied "neux." Plenty of cards, plenty of drink, plenty of all sorts of excitement for fevered persons, with a male nurse who sold his own private medicines to be taken instead of the doctor's, and society and conversation equal to, if not

racier, than that on board the convict hulks, almost within sight. The mere book-work at Sandwich was well conducted, and by no means arduous. As to "sapping" out of college hours, there was a very prudent regulation during Hollis's time, invented by some of the idlest of the old cadets, to prevent that unhealthy practice. No "neux" might presume, under pains and penalties such as Ludin had already experienced, to pass any other youth in the educational course during his whole residence at this seat of learning. This particular provision was to Hollis far from unpleasant, as he had taken a good place at the entrance examination, and was more than content with his position. He could very well afford to sit in his place in the fourth study-room, and play for tizzies (sixpences) with India-rubber dice, or put into the lotteries which the old cadets instituted among the juniors, whenever the former wanted a little ready money, and had anything worthless to dispose of in that manner.

The Hon. Adolphus was at all times ready to risk half-a-crown for books, clothes, cases of mathematical instruments, or indeed anything else, partly through good nature and much pocket-money, and partly perhaps with an idea of making to himself friends of the mammon of old cadets and corporals. There was a corporal over each of the four school-rooms, whose duty it was to keep order; and also, as it seemed, to prevent the presiding professor from paying attention to any of these different sporting events. Through him communications in writing passed from old cadets in one room to their

friends in another ; but he was never used as a postman by the juniors.

It was upon Hollis's third evening at the Royal Military College, that the corporal of the fourth study informed him, while employed upon plan-drawing more diligently than usual, that he was wanted in the back court. That word "wanted" had, he was quite aware, a worse significance at Sandwich than even at the police-office ; that bower,—the back court,—he well knew was often used by old cadets as a place of torture for unfortunates like himself, a sort of human bear-garden infinitely more abominable than the real scenes of Bruin's torment ever were ; and he went down, as he well might, with a heavy heart.

He was by no means "a funk," for he was high spirited, proud, and had the most intense hatred of all tyrannies (such as affected himself at least) ; but he had none of the courage that endures, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred that was the only sort which could help a neux at Sandwich. As he trod down the dark stone steps leading to the back court, his heart beat so that his echoing footsteps scarcely drowned its pulsations, and by the time he had opened the huge swinging door, upon the other side of which were his persecutors, he was as cold as death. It was a wintry night, "lit by a low large moon," which shone down upon the dirty roofless court, and upon two threatening figures before him, as brightly, purely, as upon sleeping ocean, windswept wolds, and solitary places inhabited by God alone [upon the Mineton Cliffs that same Saturday night

Robert Birt, who had come over from the district work-house to spend the Sunday with kind Mr. Pluckit, was walking alone in that grand light with a happy heart]. Hanborough was the taller and leaner of the two ; the other was Hale, a broad-shouldered grown man, and each of them held a wicket-stump in his hand.

"Come here, you," cried the former, gruffly. "I owe you two pounds, don't I? Don't you wish you may get it?"

"I don't want it, thank you," said poor Hollis ; "keep it as long as you like."

"Make an extempore ode to the moon," exclaimed Hale, "and be alive about it. I shall thrash you every two minutes until you have done it," and the bully took out his watch to mark the time.

Surely never was poet before in such distress for ideas as was this unfortunate "last joined," whose thoughts were running by no means towards the Parnassian height, whose soul was filled, not with Divine melodies, but with anger, and hatred, and fear. No inspiration having occurred within the given limit, Hollis received six cuts upon the back and shoulders, of which Hanborough, with a savage zeal, contributed three. The watch was again taken out to time the still-expected birth of the ode ; during the interval, Hale observed with a sneer, "You've been to Winton, you fellow, have you not? don't you find Sandwich cadets rather a change, eh?"

"Why, you see," replied Hollis, who was grinding his teeth by this time, and entertaining terrible sentiments, "at Winton the fellows were gentlemen."



A well-directed blow of Hanborough's wicket-stump from behind here prostrated the victim, and the generous-spirited youths proceeded to kick him violently as he lay upon the pavement of the place.

"Get up, you beast," cried one, "get up ;" and dexterously inserting his foot behind the poor lad's neck, he jerked him into a sitting posture.

"Now, young 'un," cried Hanborough, "what is your opinion, after that, of things in general, and us in particular, eh?"

Hollis was bruised, and sore, and faint, but he managed to hiss out from between his teeth (without giving his views upon the general question), "I think you are the dirtiest cowards and brutes I ever saw."

What happened for the next few minutes Hollis could not tell, his tormentors having injudiciously produced insensibility even to pain by their head-blows ; but when he recovered his senses, he found himself in that dark courtyard still, and with Hanborough only ; he made himself quite sure of this, cautiously looking around him as he lay upon the stones, and then leapt up to the swing door and fastened it with the speed of lightning. Bruises, and broken bones themselves, were clean forgotten, and unfelt in that fierce moment ; murder, and nothing less, was in the young man's heart, and the other read it in his flaming eyes, and trembled. Hanborough was taller and older than Hollis, and he had the wicket-stump besides, but the Hon. Plantagenet Brooks went in at him without an instant's hesitation, receiving but one blow, which indeed would, at any other time, have

felled him, but which he regarded then no more than the brush of a feather. Down, bully, down, and underneath, with your cruel head full upon the stones, and the knee of the avenger upon your chest. Lucky for your miserable life that you have a military stock on, or you would surely lose it now, with those mad fingers clutching at your throat, and the skill with which vengeance has endowed them for strangling vermin. There is an immense pleasure in having the upper hand, old cadet Hanborough, doubtless ; but when the neux has got it, is not that a different thing ? There is a great temptation, as we monitors confess, *to go on thrashing* a fellow when one has begun to do it ; but when a last-joined is the thrasher, what do we monitors, or cadet corporals, think of it then ? Young Hollis, who was naturally a good-tempered young gentleman, having found his endeavours to asphyxiate his enemy unavailing, actually took up the almost inanimate form by its lean legs, and dashed its head against the stone walls—once, twice, thrice. There was a great deal of blood, and something that looked very like brains, upon the pavement, when Hollis took his way back again through the long stone passage, whistling ; he had, as he fully believed, murdered one of his fellow-creatures, and he was pleased at it. What an awful fiend had entered into that young heart within the last half hour ! Certainly, had he then met Hale upon the way, he would have astonished that huge ruffian by flying at his throat, and tearing out his windpipe like a dog. The system of “wholesome bullying” has certainly this drawback, of not being universally and un-

exceptionally beneficial, and even in some particular cases of being pernicious ; it may break a lad's high spirit, it is true, but against that advantage one must set this other effect, that it sometimes changes his spirit to that of the devil himself.

Hollis went straight up to his sleeping apartment, instead of returning to the schoolroom ; there he doffed his Majesty's uniform, and walked right across the parade-ground to the porter's lodge : he was so excited even up to that moment as to forget that he should have leaped the ha-ha, and avoided the lodge altogether. A cadet corporal, one Merton, entered the grounds just as he neared the gate, and met him—

“Where are you going to ?” enquired he, in a pleasant voice, and with none of the ordinary expletives with which old cadet enquiries were generally freely ornamented. “You have been very cruelly beaten.”

“I have,” replied Hollis ; “but the beater got as good as he gave. Let me pass, if you please ; I am about to quit this hole immediately.”

“It is my duty,” quoth the corporal, “to prevent your doing that without leave.”

“I am a cadet no longer,” replied the three-days'-old soldier ; “you are the only man who has spoken civilly to me while I have been here ; but not even you shall stop me, Sir, while I have a knife to prevent it ; when I tell you that I have thrashed an old cadet to death, you will see that it is necessary that I should go.”

“Thrashed an old cadet ?” enquired the other, in extremity of surprise ; “who was he, then ?”

“Hanborough!”

Merton's eye lit up. “I am exceedingly glad to hear it; I am pretty popular here; I am senior corporal: I will do what I can for you. Will you give me your honour to remain in the lodge until I return; nobody shall come near you during that time, my poor fellow; here's my hand upon it.”

Hollis readily promised this; he had no fear of the mere legal consequences of what he might have done at all, having a pretty shrewd opinion that the Rexham interest would see him pretty safe out of them; the fact of his noble self having suffered such indignities at the vulgar hands of such as Hale and Hanborough was surely enough to make any amount of homicide justifiable; but he did fear Hanborough's fellow-cadets; if the word of any of them, however, could be trusted in such a matter as his, it was, he knew, that of his present protector. Merton was one of the very few cadet corporals who did their duty in defending the “neuxes” from the barbarity of their seniors, and though these were called in derision “snookers' friends,” they possessed the influence which is always, however reluctantly, awarded to men of firmness and principle. There were not more than half a dozen such in all the college; but though not strong enough for reform, they here and there put the drag on, at a time when the whole concern was going down very fast indeed in public opinion. Merton hated Hanborough as good hates evil, or perhaps even he might have hesitated at the task which he was now about to impose upon himself.

When he entered the college he found the fourth and first school-rooms in a state of the greatest excitement. Hanborough had been found in an insensible and rather shapeless state in the back yard, and was about being carried away to the hospital; and Hollis was, of course, missing.

Immediately after the study hour was over, the senior corporal convened a meeting of the old cadets: he set forth the continued brutalities and blackguardisms of Hanborough, and how that, in his judgment, he had at last met with his due reward; he told them that the young neux was now in safety, and out of their clutches; that his family, in case of his being afraid to return, were of influence sufficient to bring the matter before the master-general, or even Parliament itself, and so, perhaps, to destroy the old-cadet system of the college altogether. For these reasons he asked of them, for their own sakes, to pass a vote of censure upon the real offender, and to offer a free pardon to the over-exasperated neux. This speech, although very coldly received, had even a greater effect than the orator himself had hoped for; Hale, one of those from whom he had expected the greatest opposition, remaining silent, and even voting upon Merton's side. The argument of a public investigation had terrified the big bully at once: he had been already expelled from two schools, and the college—as his father, who was very like himself in harshness of disposition, had informed him, in the impressive words, “Fail there, and you may go to the devil”—was his last chance. [He did fail, and probably took the road suggested to him, but that was not

just now.] Merton carried his point, and himself went up to the porter's lodge to take Hollis the news. From that day the young cadet's position at the Royal Military College was altered for the better. Hanborough's many haters among the juniors received their common avenger with open arms; and the oldsters, with the exception of a stray kick or a thump when the temptation happened to be too strong for their natures, were cautious of molesting this *protégé* of the master-general and Parliament. Many of them got to be even quite companionable, when they found out how well the young heir apparent's pockets were supplied with money, and some even became really attached to him for his own sake. These last initiated him into all the amusements, and some of them were vicious enough, which the licence of the Military College admitted of. As surely as Saturday afternoon came round, these young gentlemen were certain of getting leave to spend it and the day following in London. Sometimes their invitations were from their friends, and genuine; but as such demanded excuse and dexterously weaved webs of deceit (since nothing was further from their thoughts than actually going where they were asked), artificial welcomes, or (not to put too fine a point on the matter) forgeries, were as generally resorted to. Many and many a time did the exalted name of Rexham appear at the bottom of a document, couched in most affectionate terms of anticipation, and purporting to come from Mammon Square, of which effusions his lordship himself was not only entirely innocent, but incapable. Many and many a time was the mother's eager face overclouded and tear-

bedewed upon getting some varnished falsehood from her beloved Augustus, to explain his inability to obtain leave. At the very moment, perchance, when she was reading the dear boy's hurried lines, the graceless youth himself was leaving his carpet-bag at some hotel in Covent Garden, and preparing to make a night of it with some of his fast friends; or if his exchequer was very low, he was likely enough to be without carpet-bag at all, and to have made up his mind to pass the night in a four-wheeler. There was a very comfortable cab-yard not far from Bulbul Square, and one much frequented by gentlemen cadets in impoverished circumstances, where a night's lodging could be easily procured for fourpence; if the four-wheeler happened to be wanted, however, the tenant was liable to be served with an ejection without notice: for this same sum also, a sandwich of colossal dimensions and a huge glass of ale were to be had, next day, at a public-house round the corner, and with that humble fare was the Hon. Adolphus Henry Plantagenet Brooks Hollis not seldom compelled to content himself for the entire Sabbath; anything was better than a return to "the shop," which was the undignified title by which the Royal Military College was known to its inhabitants; and a visit to the paternal establishment, as has been hinted, would have produced confusion.

Upon one occasion, when Master Hollis was in company with Legion, the two young gentlemen got into great straits indeed: they had recklessly expended the small remains of their capital in four cigars, and when they found themselves at Hungerford Market, upon Sunday

evening, on their way back to college, they had nothing but three halfpence between them to defray their fare. Now at that time and place it was, and perhaps it is still, customary for many peripatetic preachers to exhort the pleasure-seekers of the metropolis to turn from their evil practices, and to leave travelling by steamers for week days ; and after the exhortation there is a little something collected in a hat and given to the minister. When the two young friends arrived there on this particular evening, there were several pulpits—which assume in these regions the form of tubs—quite unoccupied, and a great congregation, whom such preachers as there were did not appear to interest, running loose about the market without a pastor.

“Come,” said Hollis to his friend, “you’ve got the gift of the gab ; give the folks a sermon, and I’ll go round with the hat.”

“It’s a grand idea,” replied Legion ; “but I think you shall have the privilege of putting it into practice yourself.”

“I’ll toss you, which of us shall be parson and which clerk,” said Hollis.

“Done,” cried the other ; “Woman, lovely woman ;” but the penny (more than half their worldly wealth,) in spite of that adjuration, or even, perhaps, in consequence of the association of ideas, came down with the presentment of his Majesty, George IV., exposed to view, and so Legion preached.

Far be it from us to usurp the office of the *Penny Pulpit*, by setting down the heads of that discourse ; all that



we know is, that it lasted five-and-twenty minutes, excited infinite interest, and procured for the joint-stock of the two youths no less than seventeen pennyworth of half-pence and one farthing, wherewith they reached their journey's end like gentlemen. It was the first money that either of them had ever obtained by their own exertions, and there was quite a flush of honest pride upon the cheeks of both. The thinker and the worker, the man of ideas, and the man of execution, had been each substantially rewarded. We wish that this could be said to be the only occasion upon which our gentleman cadet procured a little capital in a somewhat unprofessional manner: but we are assured that it was Legion and himself who played that most unjustifiable trick upon the intoxicated, but otherwise well-to-do, oid gentleman, residing in the neighbourhood of Clapham, the memory of which lingers even to this day about "the shop."

They were about to return upon a certain evening from Greenhurst Fair to the college, when it suddenly struck them—it was always striking them without doing them much hurt—that they had spent all their money. They had but a very little time to spare before the college gates would be closed, and should they be late, arrest and stoppage of leave they well knew must follow. It may be urged that they could surely have paid their fares upon the termination of their journey; but, unfortunately, through some strange misconception of the principles of justice prevalent among the gentlemen cadets, the Greenhurst drivers were accustomed, in their dealings with that honourable corps, to demand the money first.

Perhaps they might have been less likely to trust these particular two than any others, since, having been some ten months in the regiment, the pair had got by this time to be rather better known than appreciated. No Jarvey, at all events, would convey them on this particular evening, and they had almost made up their minds to walk home at all hazards, when they suddenly came upon an old gentleman, or rather, an old gentleman came upon them, with all sails set, and half seas over, with force enough to have sunk himself there and then, but for their prompt aid. He was a respectable trader from Clapham, and nominally homeward bound, as it seemed, when spoken with ; but he had lost his bearings, and was not in the way to regain his course. These audacious young privateers, therefore, finding him loaded with specie, determined to make a prize of him, and by showing Exeter Hall colours, and practising other disgraceful deceptions, positively took him, of his own accord, in tow, and docked him high and dry in a Greenhurst fly. To the driver they represented this individual as being their respected governor, and led the old gentleman himself to believe that they were on the road to Clapham. He thanked them with ready tears, again and again, and promised them some tea when he should arrive at home, as also a peculiar species of muffin, for the making of which, it seemed, his wife was celebrated. As they drove down upon Sandwich, and into view of the many lights that fringe its common, the victim began, as he thought, to recognise the twinkle from his own particular villa ; nor even when the two young gentlemen had leapt out at the

college gates, and left him alone in the vehicle, and to pay for it, could he be easily persuaded that the place at which he had arrived was not his familiar Clapham.

For the following still less pardonable device for raising the wind, Gentleman Cadet Hollis was only partially and in a secondary degree responsible ; it arose from a suggestion of Preston's, and was played off in a very ingenious but hazardous manner upon the agricultural interest. Preston was now grown into a thick-set whiskered young man, while most of his old Dimbledon friends were still in the hobbadehoy or transition state ; and getting another big fellow of the name of Gresley to assist him, they thus took advantage of their grown-up and very discreet appearance. Preston attired himself as a farmer, with which profession, indeed, he was practically very well acquainted ; and putting Gresley and Hollis into the garments of a drover and his boy, they set out upon a certain holiday for the great sheep fair held at Feltham, about seven miles from the Military College. He was a good judge of sheep, he said, and designed to buy a couple of hundred or so, as a speculation ; which, considering that the three had but one crown piece between them, was, to say the least of it, rather an ambitious intention. Preston, however, was a young man equal to most situations.

They arrived at the scene of action rather late, but there were still many score of flocks awaiting buyers, and the young man, accompanied by his more artless confederates, went about admiring their fleecy sides, and pinching them in the neighbourhood of their tails in the most business-like manner possible. At last he found a

pen of sheep that seemed to satisfy his somewhat fastidious taste, and he at once proceeded to bargain with the salesman. The latter wanted thirty shillings apiece for the whole lot, which consisted of two hundred, while Preston thought twenty-eight shillings was as much as he ought to give,—that is to offer. A compromise was at last effected, and twenty-nine shillings a head finally fixed upon, or two hundred and ninety pounds in all, which the purchaser volunteered to make two hundred and ninety-one, for the benefit of the drover. This put the latter in great good humour, and he very readily promised to watch the flock with Preston and Hollis, while Gresley, who was the cashier, went into the town with the salesman to settle his pecuniary claim: his object being to expend the crown piece in drink by way of gaining time, while Preston should, if possible, dispose of the sheep at a profit. Again and again did buyers approach the pen, for the lot was indeed a very choice one, and again and again did Preston's modest price of thirty shillings a head frustrate their good intentions. The fair had begun to thin, and a panorama of Botany Bay to expand itself to the mind's eye of more than one of the hardy young speculators, before, by a happy chance, the managing director of the company contrived to part with his two hundred, at sixpence a head profit, or a total gain (when the drover had received his sovereign) of four pounds. Gresley and his new acquaintance were found in high good-humour at the inn, the former having executed his duty to the letter, and expended the whole of the crown piece in refreshing liquors.

Whatever may be thought of the morality of these little adventures, they were certainly the bright side of life at the Royal Military College. For those unhappy neuxes who had short purses and no friends among the seniors, the first beginning of their military existence was insipid enough, and their first taste of the laurel bitter indeed. Mechanical drilling was their chief exercise, and the being bullied their continuous fate. As for Ludin, his treatment upon his return from hospital from the whole body of cadets was such, that the authority of the master-general himself was interposed to check it, and the lad was promoted to be a corporal to set him above harm's way before he had been a cadet a year. Bullying, indeed, was after that out of the question, since it is expulsion to touch a corporal; but a law was immediately passed by the powerful oligarchy who misruled the place, that the new creation should be outlawed, "put to Coventry," by the whole corps; nor, indeed, was he ever spoken to by a single cadet, save in the course of duty, during the rest of his sojourn at the Military College. The authorities, wearied out at last by opposition, and not knowing where to begin in any effectual cleansing of this Augean stable, actually removed Ludin of their own accord, and afforded, of course, a virtual triumph to the Hales and Hanboroughs. It is satisfactory, nevertheless, to be able to state, that an hour of retribution did come to both these gentlemen, and that they were ignominiously expelled even from the not-over-particular college at Sandwich.

Hollis himself was not destined long to pursue his

military career. On one of his numerous Saturday evening visits to London,—clandestine as far as his people at home were concerned, and fraudulent with respect to the authorities at the college,—he strayed, in the company of his chosen companion Preston, into a meeting of the friends of freedom at St. Martin's Hall. Not that the two youths were in the least degree interested in extension of the suffrage, or cheap bread ; or had, in fact, any greater sympathy with the lower classes than fast young men in general, who entertain, when they have a feeling upon the subject at all, a cruel, or at least an antagonistic one ; but they wanted a lark, and simply went into Long Acre to look for it.

The body of the vast hall was densely crowded and the galleries were filling fast, when they entered and took their places among the tiers of seats that were behind the platform. It was noticeable that there was none of that practical joking or light banter among those present which almost always precedes the opening of business in an English crowd, whether it be before the first hymn sung at the Sunday camp-meeting, or before the curtain rises at the popular minor theatre. The earnest looks of the multitude, and the patience with which they awaited the arrival of their favourite orators, annoyed the two young men. They hated earnestness,—feeling any manifestation of it, perhaps, in some measure as a reproach to themselves,—and they had not come to St. Martin's Hall by any means with the idea of spending there a quiet evening. Nothing, however, in the shape of a row had as yet offered itself, and except when this or that Chartist

leader, or democratic writer, was pointed out here and there by those who had the privilege of recognising them, there was scarcely a word spoken above conversation pitch. The assembly seemed to be composed principally of working men, with a large sprinkling of well-dressed persons whose professions it was not easy to guess at. After some thirty minutes, the chairman, who was a member of Parliament, rose up to open the proceedings, and immediately afterwards one of the most popular of the Chartist leaders proposed the first resolution. His appearance upon the platform was the signal for the most tremendous cheering, which very certainly was not called forth by his personal looks. He was a slight, insignificant person, with sallow complexion and exceedingly red hair, and he wore, with a reckless disregard to the latter fact, a brick-coloured waistcoat and a crimson neckerchief.

"What a guy!" remarked Hollis to his companion, at first sight of this orator; but the expression, luckily for both of them, was lost in the shouting.

This man had suffered for the people, as both he and they considered, for he had been in prison on account of their common opinions for three long years, and the circumstance gave him a great advantage over those rivals who could only profess their readiness to suffer. He was the editor of a people's newspaper, and therefore *en rapport*, every week, with a considerable body of his present audience; and he was also, in no mean degree, a poet, and recognised as such by quite other portions of the press than those with which he was politically connected. But what in reality both caused and sustained

his popularity was a genuine gift of eloquence, and a store of burning words ready to his tongue, such as, perhaps—with the exception of some half a dozen or fewer—no orator in the land could boast of. An indifferent or even hostile listener could scarcely fail to be carried away by this man's speaking, and an audience such as was now before him he swayed this way and that at will, as the mountain wind sways the fir-tops.

Persons in a very artificial state, however,—out of a manure heap such as a military college, for instance,—rather soon get a good deal tired of even the most brilliant flights of imagination; and the listening to a declamation, however spirited, upon national wrongs, by no means comes up to that class of persons' definition of a pleasant evening. Therefore it was, that, in the middle of a particularly pyrotechnic sentence of this orator's, there fell upon the astonished ears of that great company a cry as of an enamoured cat bewailing upon the housetop his distance from the object of his affections, and every eye was instantly turned in wrath towards the tier behind the platform. Messrs. Hollis and Preston, however, from whom this discord proceeded, were by no means deficient in presence of mind, and their heads turned as rapidly as did those of others, as if to behold some offender sitting beyond them. Had they not taken that precaution quite so quickly, they might have learnt a lesson that would have deterred them from trying their musical experiment again. If they had seen but a few of the hundred furious faces that looked up luridly at that obnoxious sound, they could not have failed to know that among such auditors



the playing of tricks would be more than dangerous. One old man, indeed, a keen wiry fellow sitting close behind them, glared back upon their upturned faces, even as it was, with a look of suspicion and even hatred; but Preston's open and innocently indignant countenance appeared to convince him of his mistake.

Presently the tumult subsided, and the orator recovered his hold upon the general attention. Collecting dexterously the leading threads of his discourse together, he was evidently preparing himself for a more than usually impressive peroration, when again burst forth the cry of the enamoured cat upon the housetops, bewailing his distance from the object of his affections, with even a greater shrillness than before. The orator stopped short, the chairman rose, and the body of people in the hall seemed to rise, close packed as they were, *en masse*, and pour like a raging flood up towards the offenders. Kicked and cuffed and bruised as the young men already were by their immediate neighbours, it did not seem that they would have a chance for life itself, if once that infuriated throng should but get at them. Above the war of the angry multitude, the crashing of seats, and the cries of "throw them over," the voice of the grim old man was distinctly heard by the unhappy victims, first in wrath and accompanying many a punch and kick, and then in a sort of savage pity, which at any other time they would have resented almost as much.

"You take one, Jem, and you the other," cried he, to two gigantic unknowns close beside him; "that way down the back-stairs, or the foolish young devils will be

killed ; take them into the court and keep them until I come out to you. Here, boys, here," cried he to the thickening crowd, "they have slunk down that way, yonder, into the hall."

A downward movement of the crowd at once, proved how great the influence of the old fellow was, as well as the safety of the two unhappy youths. As it was, they did not escape easily from their immediate foes, but received full many a blow as their two rough preservers dragged them down the narrow staircase, across the street, and through an archway into a dark court ; as for defending themselves,—had they been a dozen full-grown men, each with the strength of a Hercules, they would have been trampled under a thousand feet in a few minutes more ; many an innocent person only got out of that fierce *mêlée* a maimed man for months, or doomed perhaps to limp for the rest of his life-pilgrimage. It was more than a quarter of an hour before the old man could extricate himself and reach the court. Even then the lads were still sick and faint, and although somewhat recovered, had a consciousness of the peril from which they had even now perhaps not wholly escaped, such as subdued their natural high spirits and rendered them humble enough. They were about to thank their preserver with fervent gratitude, but he stopped their mouths at once with quite a little rope of oaths.

"Don't thank me ; I wish you were crushed to death ; you and all the cruel-hearted lot of ye ; there will be many a widow wailing for her son's broken limb this night, since it cannot now keep her from the workhouse ;

many a wife and child will go without bread for weeks because of your devilry. I tell you I saw seven of the people, seven men well worth your whole idle race, taken out on shutters. Damn you both ! Mind ye, I'm fit to kill ye ; don't thank me. Not only don't ye care for what the poor man suffers, but you must come and jeer at him, must you, when he tells his tale to his fellows ? Let me never see your two faces again in St. Martin's Hall. Curse your young souls ! Why," exclaimed the speaker, stopping short in a flood of execration, " why what's this, Jem ? The lad has got his arm broken." He said this of young Hollis, who had indeed fallen into a dead swoon through terror at the old man's words and manner, as much as through the pain of the injured limb. " Poor fellow ; here, let us tie this handkerchief about it ; go fetch a cab. I dare say he has a mother too ; you other," — turning to Preston, — " what is your friend's name ? where does he live ? Hollis ? What, one of the Rexham lot ! Confound that Jem, why don't he bring the cab ? Why my wife must have suckled this lad. Poor lad ! Poor chap !"

The cab came up ; and Volney Groves, for he indeed it was, placed the still inanimate body tenderly within it, and bidding the men " good-night," got in with Preston.

" Where is it ?" asked the driver.

" Bulbul Square," cried Volney Groves, but muttering to himself, " no, perhaps it would kill the poor lady," immediately added, " Hai ! the back of the square ; Brickstreet, opposite the Mews ; fifth or sixth door on the left hand ; brass plate with ' Field ' upon it, ' Surgeon,'"



## CHAPTER XIV.

BY MY LADY'S DEATH-BED.

**M**R. FIELD was not a much older-looking man than when we left him some seven years ago; his moderate sized house and simple furniture were much the same, and even his coat but little brighter looking than that which we saw him wearing by the death-bed in Bulbul Mews; yet he was now, as far as his generosity would permit him to be, a rich man, very welcome among the sick aristocracy, and meeting Sir Toby Ruffles himself in consultation daily. Even at the late hour at which the cab containing the wounded boy drove up to his door, he had but just left the bedside of Lady Rexham herself. While Sir Toby had prated conventionally of the possible benefit she might derive by going down to her country seat at once, with years of usefulness before her if she took proper precautions, and having change of air and scene as soon as convenient, Mr Field knew well, and perhaps Sir Toby likewise, that the long suffering woman was about to die. She knew it well herself.

"I wish my dear, dear son," she had said, "to be with me for the little time that yet remains to me. They will not let him come from the military college. He is under arrest—it has happened so often that I cannot rely upon his being here even next week—for trifling and almost involuntary misconduct. Could you persuade Lord Rexham to use his influence? I am dying, as you know, doctors, and I long so to see my son."

They had both promised to do all they could, and had had an interview with his lordship that very evening, with slight success indeed. Adolphus was to come up to town on the ensuing Saturday for the usual holiday,—that was all. "I have never suffered my wife to indulge her whims and fancies," observed the model husband, "and I am not going to begin now. As for Lady Rexham's dying, she has always been dying ever since I have known her, whenever she could not get exactly what she wanted."

Sir Toby chuckled, and agreed that it was certainly a favourite plan with many ladies. Mr. Field said nothing, but took upon himself the responsibility of despatching a private note to the commanding officer at Sandwich that same evening, explaining something of the circumstances of the case, and begging that upon no account should Gentleman Cadet Hollis be prevented from coming to Bulbul Square in the ensuing week. He was musing upon this matter, doubtful if whether even then the mother would be alive or not, to see her boy, when his front door-bell rang, and the party arrived from St. Martin's Hall.

Preston frankly told him of their having played truant from Sandwich, and of the circumstances under which his friend had met with his accident, and Mr. Field promised not to mention Preston's name in the business. The surgeon was a strictly conscientious man, and would at any time have reprobated their dissimulation extremely, but he was too overjoyed at getting young Hollis thus fortunately within reach of his mother to think of anything else. The fracture was a simple one enough, but it rendered any return to college for some weeks quite out of the question.

The next morning Mr. Field waited upon his lordship, whom he found employed at his usual Sunday occupation,—reading *Bell's Life* in the smoking-room,—and as cautiously as possible opened the case. The old man seemed at first really alarmed at his only son's misfortune, but, upon the doctor's injudicious avowal that it was nothing very serious, began to curse the Hon. Adolphus with great intensity.

“A blackguard young fellow, that went to Chartist meetings, and mixed himself up with a low lot of people, it served him devilish well right!” (His lordship himself had been intimate with numberless dog-fanciers, and hand-and-glove with the more disreputable of the prize-fighters from his earliest youth.) “His cutting away, too, from the college without leave, that would, doubtless, impede the young man's promotion, and play the devil with his prospects.” He consented, however, to let the youth be removed to Bulbul Square at once, and even gave him a tolerably gracious reception, sitting by the side of the

couch, smoking cigars, and interchanging with him conversation such as, even at the Royal Military College, would have been considered racy.

In the evening, and after Lady Rexham had been prudently prepared for the interview, the young man went up stairs to see his mother. When he first looked upon the thin, wan face, and cavernous eyes, which yet smiled on him so tenderly, he was deeply shocked. Nobody had told him that she was more than usually weak and ailing. Mr. Field had purposely left him, for his own good, to feel for himself that it was possible that he would soon be motherless. In her own letters, the sweet, unselfish woman had never mentioned the disease which preyed upon her, and which she had known would kill her before the doctors knew. His lordship had never written to the boy at all. Flushed with his wicked talk, and in the best of spirits at having escaped from the many wearisome drills that, but for his accident, would have awaited him at Sandwich for the next two months, this coming into a darkened sick room unexpectedly, and into the presence, as it almost seemed, of death itself, affected the youth much. His long course of vicious indulgence, his "dumb forgetfulness" of the kind heart from which he well knew his own image was never absent, the desolate life which he felt sure she must have led, and which he had never sacrificed a single wicked pleasure to alleviate even for a day,—all these bitter reflections came over him upon a sudden, like a flood, and drowned his utterance. Neither could his mother at first speak, for thankfulness at having her dear boy again, and from anxiety at the sight of his

bandaged arm ; the hour that he spent upon this occasion in her chamber was by very far the most solemn in the whole of his young life. He had a clear insight, for the first time, into the beautiful depths of a true Christian soul. He felt the awful difference between such an one and his own debauched nature, with a distinctness, and even a terror, not to be lightly forgotten. He made, in silence, heartfelt vows of reformation and repentance for the future. One touch of those pale lips upon his brow, as she said, "God bless you," seemed indeed a baptism and a regeneration of love.

As he lay awake that night upon his bed for hours, he wept child's tears once more, and (which was a greater proof, perhaps, of healthy change in him than anything) he thought of his friend Preston, and wondered if he had a mother such as his. As for his religious belief, if it could be called so, he had hitherto looked upon Christianity as a respectable and recognised institution, very useful, he had been led to understand, and, of course, Conservative, but which had little or nothing to do with the upper classes of society at all ; he had never heard any reference to it, from any one save his mother, with the exception of sundry dull text-expositions from the pulpit, and of such scanty information as had been imparted to the Sunday classes at his various schools.

The whole teaching of the New Testament was a dead letter to him, as it had been to nineteen out of twenty of all with whom he had associated from early boyhood. He had never read it for himself, nor had any one ever taken the trouble to read it to him. The captain (who was at



that time also the chaplain) at the Royal Military College, in reading the Cadet Company the eleventh chapter of the Second Book of Corinthians, one wet Sunday, had absolutely left out the words "I speak as a fool," wherever they occurred, for fear his congregation should laugh at him. Hollis had observed his elders to reserve, for the most part, the sacred volume for the Sabbath-day, and never to suffer it to influence a single week day project, or a single opinion upon any subject; only he remembered some of them to have quoted a scrap or two of Scripture, in order to excuse to themselves what seemed to be a cruel or a selfish act. He had also, now and then, been in a company where he had heard infidels very roughly spoken of. If some remarkably striking book had been mentioned to him as having been recently published, advocating the practice of universal love and tenderness, without respect to the worldly position of the parties, he would, probably, have ordered it of his bookseller, on account of its democratic absurdity and enthusiasm; but he would have been surprised to find that he in reality possessed the work already, and that it went by the name of the New Testament.

No City Arab, no naked New Zealander, could possibly have known less of true Christianity than did the Honourable Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis at the age of seventeen. The few ideas which he had upon the subject were not only bad ones, but precisely contrary to the facts. If he had been asked, for instance, what right he had to be living a life of reckless pleasure, utterly careless of the circumstances of his poorer brethren it is

more than likely that he would have grounded his privilege, in some dim hearsay fashion, upon Revelation itself. It was surprising how all these notions of his now seemed to collapse and fade away. It appeared as though his dying mother had become miraculously aware of what were the precise things wanting in the misused heart of her son. Heretofore her opportunities of speaking to him upon any serious subjects had been few, and, it must be confessed, that she had seldom taken advantage of them. She had given her boy credit—(and who of our mothers has not done the same?)—for an infinity of virtues which he never possessed, and among them that of studying the Word of God for himself; she pictured him to herself quite naturally, reading his Bible morning and evening; and, morning and evening, kneeling down by his bedside to say his prayers. Her terror now (but one which she never mentioned to him), was, lest the young man should be treading his father's path. It was impossible to mistake for cant or exaggerated religious feeling, that earnestness with which she warned him away from those vices whereof she had been an unhappy witness all her married life.

The very next day Adolphus had an example of one of those fits of fury, to which Lord Rexham so often treated his lady wife. A missive arrived in the afternoon from Sandwich acquainting him with the summary dismissal of his son: Mr. Field's letter,—of which however, luckily, no mention was made,—having opened the drowsy eyes of the authorities to the young gentleman's imitation of his father's handwriting. His lordship came up stairs into

the room where mother and son were, the one in bed, and the other on the sofa, and presented them with some of the choicest flowers of his rhetoric.

"My mother has nothing to do with all this, my lord," urged the young man. "For Heaven's sake spare her such words as these."

"You canting young forger," replied Lord Viscount Rexham, "why, what hypocrisy is this? You were glib enough with your tongue, I think, only yesterday, yourself. Who is to bear the expense of your changing your profession in this manner, I should like to know, and never to open his mouth? Is all my trouble and annoyance in getting you an appointment to be thrown away, and I not to say a word about it? You shall go into the church now, damned if you sha'n't, whether you like it or no. I've got no money to spare in giving you a commission, I can tell you."

This respectable old nobleman flung himself out of the room at the termination of his judicial harangue, in such a towering passion, and looked so excessively purple in the face as he went down stairs, that hopes were entertained throughout the servants' hall of an immediate apoplexy. "If the boy is in the house to-morrow," were his last stormful words, "broken arm or no broken arm, I'll kick him out of it."

So, that very night, the late gentleman cadet was taken down by Mr. Field out of his father's sight, to the country-seat in Rookshire, and in a few days afterwards, to his great joy, was followed by Lady Rexham herself. This last favour, strange to say, had been accorded to

Adolphus by his lordship at the lad's own request. He had written at his mother's desire, to express his unfeigned sorrow at what had occurred, as also to ask for a private tutor to be procured for him in preparation for the university ; and he had taken the opportunity at the same time of entreating that his mother might come down to him ; all which would of course have been mere waste paper, but from a certain infusion of the wisdom of the serpent concocted by the young man himself. He had not been at the Royal Military College so long, without learning something of the ways and means by which money was procurable by young persons of good expectations, and of what such might do, upon their parts, for their elders. Lord Rexham's pecuniary difficulties were now such as to have become no secret to anybody, nor did his son hesitate to offer upon coming of age to assist him to any reasonable extent, upon consideration of getting his own present wishes gratified. It was a bold stroke even for the hero of the sheepfair, and of Hungerford Market, but it succeeded admirably ; and down came an immediate remittance, a tutor, and Lady Rexham.

It may be thought that this was scarcely the effect that might have been anticipated in so lately reformed a gentleman as Mr. Adolphus, and it must be certainly confessed that the teaching was temporarily forgotten in his anxiety to benefit the teacher herself. To see his mother happy was now the object which the boy chiefly cared for, and any means to obtain that end seemed doubtless justifiable to a mind not much accustomed to weigh scruples of conscience. Amidst these fair country scenes,

and with her dear boy beside her,—even reading to her aloud for the first week or so, and rarely weary of watching by her couch,—Lady Rexham appeared to be somewhat gaining strength. As she did so, and as the immediate fear of losing her wore away, the good resolutions of her son began to waver proportionably also. He was rapidly getting well of his hurt, and worked hard, and very creditably, at the mathematics with his tutor,—a young man who, although recommended to Lord Rexham solely by advertisement, turned out to be an excellent scholar, and accomplished gentleman. Mr. Hollis even went so far upon two several occasions, as to visit the houses of poor persons in his ancestral parish, and when there was any call upon his benevolence he was by no means sparing of his purse. A part of the day, however (for it was not the hunting season), still hung somewhat heavily upon his hands, and as was natural he spent it in riding over to the country-houses of Sir Thomas Mydleton, and the Dowager Lady Courtwell, his neighbours, who had sons of his own age. It was to a farm belonging to this lady that the inhabitants of the parish workhouse emigrated after the fire ; and thence it arose that the Hon. Adolphus Hollis became intimate with Miss Sarah Jones, and interfered, as we have seen, with the young affections of Robert Birt.

A month ago he would have been insolent enough to the poor workhouse lad, and have marvelled much at his entertaining so refined a feeling as that of jealousy ; but now, although he had indeed failed to carry his new principles into practice, he was really sorry for the pain

which he had inflicted, and certainly not inclined to boast of his own vicious conduct. So altered was he in this last respect, that the young head of the house of Courtwell—which had been a family of distinction at the Druidical period, and possessed a proverb of its own as old as the hills, to the effect that no member of it had ever been without a bad heart and an excellent stomach—rallied Adolphus upon his silence, when Mademoiselle Jones and her attractions came uppermost on their conversation wheel (which was rather a muddy one), complaining that Hollis had turned Methodist: a remark which did not prove his lordship to be conversant with the peculiarities of religious sectarianism.

Upon a certain day this young nobleman's mother found Lady Rexham (for a wonder) enabled to receive her when she called, and after her departure, the invalid, in a state of no little excitement, and changed shockingly for the worse, awaited the return of her son from his ride.

"Dearest Adolphus," said she, "I have had some intelligence from Lady Courtwell which has given me the greatest concern. It was to one of her farms it seems that the workhouse children were removed, after that fire we heard of."

The blood of all his noble race suffused the young man's cheeks, and tingled in his delicate ears. He grew in fact as red as a turkey-cock.

"Well, and who do you think was the hero of the fire, the lad who saved the young girl's life at the risk of his own, and broke his arm in doing so? Why little Robert,

the son of poor Sarah Thwaite that was ; your playfellow of old ; poor Robert Birt ! ”

“ Robert Birt, mother ! ” cried the young man with a real interest, the recollections of his early friendship, faint as they were, smiting him sorely. “ I had no idea that it was *our* Robert.”

“ I should so like to see the poor boy again, before, before—— ” Her voice failed her, and her eyes filled with tears.

“ Nay mother, nay,” exclaimed her son affectionately, as he flew to her pillow ; “ you promised me not to talk like that again. You are getting better, dearest ; we shall live together ever so long.”

“ Not a week longer, my child,—do not deceive yourself,—not a day, I think ; I *hope*, I had almost said, but that that were unkind to you. Don’t ring, the doctor is in the house if that could aid me. Send for Robert Birt, Adolphus ; I shall see his mother soon,—in a few hours,—and what shall I have to tell her of the son she left behind her in my charge ? ”

“ Dearest mother, be calm ; I will ride and fetch him myself.”

“ Do so, Adolphus, do so ; oh, ride fast. Yet a little time, yet a little—— ” she murmured prayerfully, as her son left the room. Then her lips began to move, but without speech, and her soul to hold high converse with its God. After a while she heard, as she thought, the horse’s hoofs returning, and her mind again reverted to earthly things. “ I did my best for him as I then thought,” she murmured, “ but I dare not think so now,

'in memory of the myrtle bough,' by the tender token." Her heart began to beat rapidly, and her throat to tighten almost to suffocation. The thoughts of the dying woman had flown to her young lover in the far-back youthful time. Tenderly, purely, the nature which she had striven to put away from her for so many years, was now re-asserting itself at the last. "Frank, Frank," she whispered to herself. The horse's hoofs were now distinctly heard. She turned her dim but anxious eyes towards the door. Was this he, the graceful youth with the brown curls and brilliant glance? Nay, but her sight is indeed failing, not to recognise her own son Adolphus! The other then, the square-set, robust youth, with the thoughtful brows, that must be he. Healthy as his frame would bespeak him to be, however, he has not a trace of colour; deadly pale, speechless, with reverent eyes, he comes towards her, kneels beside her couch, and presses to her hand his eager lips.

"Kiss me, Robert, I love you," said she, affectionately.

He kissed passionately that fevered mouth. "And I love *you*, God knows, mother." He added this last word in a whisper, only to be caught by her ears. She told him by one look that she understood all that he would have said, and his kindly fear lest Adolphus should feel grieved at overhearing such an expression from his mouth.

"God bless you my son," she added in the same stifled tone. And indeed she could speak in no other, for she was dying fast. Then Robert gave place at the bedside to him whose right it was to kneel there. How



lovingly did her fingers linger in the long soft locks of her boy, as they spread luxuriantly upon the coverlet. He could not trust himself to look upon her. His face was hidden, but his arms were stretched out over her, as though he would have held her from the clutch of Death. Not only, as it seemed to him, was his mother dying, but his guardian angel was at the same time pruning her glorious wings for heaven. He was about to be left doubly desolate, spiritually as well as temporarily orphaned.

"Stay with me, dearest mother, stay with me," sobbed he, in an agony of what was far from a selfish love. "I have no friend on earth but thee."

Robert was standing apart, but yet not able to withdraw his eyes from this mournful scene. She looked towards him, and at the sign he came close to her, upon the other side of the couch. "Love one another," she with difficulty articulated, her cold fingers touching theirs.

Adolphus stretched out his hand across the bed, and Robert was about to clasp it, when the dim eyes closed for ever. The head drooped back a little, and the face lay looking upwards with a smile of contentment, as though regarding through those shut eyelids the flight of the spirit to its God.

"We regret to announce," said the papers of the ensuing morning, "the death, at the family residence, Hartstone Hall, Rookshire, of Anne, wife of Henry Viscount Rexham, and only daughter of the late John Brooks, Esq., Baland Park, Lancashire. His lordship,

whom business of a pressing nature detained in town, was unable to reach Hartstone in time to receive her *adieux*. The lamented event being exceedingly sudden and unlooked-for, there was no one about her save her only son and the domestics. By her ladyship's demise the following noble and distinguished personages are plunged into the deepest grief:—The Marquis and Marchioness of Simperton, the Earl and Countess of Hardbake, the Earl and Countess of Creamice, the Lady Beebonnet, Sir Charles Lester, the Bishop of Plumbun, and many others."

The two real mourners parted company at that death-bed. Nothing short of the dying wishes of Lady Rexham would have induced Robert Birt to come under the same roof with her profligate son. The injury—which he tried in vain to look upon in the philosophic light of a benefit—done to him by that young gentleman, was at present too fresh in his memory to admit of forgiveness.

After the burial, at which of course Robert did not venture to attend,—since a sympathetic workhouse pupil-teacher, with a pocket handkerchief probably of cotton, would indeed have been out of place amidst that solemn procession of (empty) carriages of the county nobility,—young Hollis rode once more over to the farm to offer alliance.

We are quite out of all patience with this vulgar young fellow standing so obstinately upon his dignity; but, to confess the truth, these overtures were rejected. The Marquis de Millefleurs—to compare great things with

small—could not have taken a more lofty ground with the Chevalier Frontignac, upon the occasion of Mademoiselle Variété's abandoning the marquis's protection for that of his rival, than did Robert Birt in the matter of Miss Sarah Jones. To complete the absurdity of the thing, there was also even the element of superstition in it.

"It was my mother's wish, whom you esteemed, I know. "

("Esteemed!" echoed Robert, and at that word his lip would have curled, but that his blood was not good enough for such a manifestation of feeling.)

"It was her latest wish," urged the young gentleman, "that we two should be what we once were,—friends. We shook hands at her bedside."

"Nay, Sir," cried Robert, sharply, "but we did *not* shake hands, if you remember. Had we done so, I would not now dare to refuse you mine."

A look of scorn, as it well might, passed over the other's features, perhaps at the quibble, perhaps at the idea of a parish orphan associating his own affairs so nearly with those of Providence, and the British aristocracy. Birt himself seemed to be a little ashamed of what he had said.

"I wish you well," he added; "I will try to forgive you." Then, with increased bitterness, "I believe you are sorry for the wrong you have done to *me*. You care nothing at all for her you may have destroyed for the sake of a passing whim. I have nothing in common with you and such as you; our paths diverge, and the

straighter we keep in them the further we shall separate from one another."

"Then good-bye, Robert."

"Good-bye, Mr. Hollis," replied the other stiffly; who was not, perhaps, the least proud of these two young men.





## CHAPTER XV.

### ST. BONIFACE.

**R**OBERT BIRT'S existence had been by no means monopolised during this period by mere sentimentalities. He had been fulfilling his duties very accurately, besides diligently improving himself under the auspices of his friend Mr. Candid. That kindly Scot was now instructing him in branches of mathematics far higher than there was any need for him to be conversant with, as a pupil teacher. The Will-o'-the-wisp attraction of Miss Sarah Jones being utterly extinguished, the youth was able to follow the pure flame of science with undeviating steps. He was not by any means scatheless, or even heart-whole, but he had applied the hot iron of jealousy to the afflicted part with such determination, that he was in reality, perhaps, safer than if he had never been wounded. He was sorrowful, even to bitterness, about the fate of the young woman, who, in the absence of more attractive swains, and after an ineffectual attempt to recover Robert, had contentedly

taken up with the other male teacher ; but interference was, of course, quite out of the question. The pictures of future happiness in which she had formed so prominent a figure did not lose their colours gradually, and fade away as they would have done had her conduct, perhaps, been a little less outrageous ; but were swept at once from his mental *retina*, leaving a blank to be filled up by totally different objects.

The government inspector, upon paying his second visit to this district workhouse, spent a few minutes, after his work was done, in the schoolmaster's room. The two men were not unlike in cast of countenance, although totally different in feature. Both were self-educated men, but the inspector had had the advantage of the established methods of education over and above.

"Does young Birt go on as steadily with you as you described at my last visit, Mr. Candid?"

"Quite, Sir ; there is no fault to find with him whatever."

"His knowledge of what is here required of him does you the greatest credit,"—the schoolmaster bowed slightly, but without suppleness, while the merest shadow of a smile played around his lips—"and moreover," pursued the inspector, "upon examining him in much higher subjects, his mathematical knowledge fairly astonished me, I assure you."

"He is an apt pupil, Sir," replied Mr. Candid, modestly ; "he has learnt pretty nearly all that I have to teach him."

"He is at this moment, Mr. Candid, in possession of

sufficient acquirements to take his degree, and even moderate honours at the university."

"Is it possible, Sir?" ejaculated the schoolmaster with a slight but irrepressible grimace, which made the inspector redden.

"You seem to have a low opinion of what our universities require, Sir; the belief is general, and not altogether unfounded, but you are mistaken, believe me. However, I like this boy; if he were sent to my college, St. Boniface, and did but keep steady, his fortune would be made."

"His antecedents would, I fear, be scarcely palatable to his companions," remarked the schoolmaster coldly.

"You do us wrong, Sir," returned the other earnestly, but without heat; "at *my* college (I do not pretend to answer for others), good scholarship is itself nobility. Insignificant birth is certainly there no bar to an industrious lad. My own father—who was a far better man than I—was a carpenter, but I hold my fellowship notwithstanding, and have come to consider myself, through long impunity, pretty safe from insult."

"Carpenters' sons have been great, as well as wise and good men, before this, who have never gained fellowships at St. Boniface," observed the schoolmaster quietly.

"I acknowledge my error; I stand reproved," replied the inspector hastily. "I have little pride of my own, though, if I know myself. Pride in my college made me speak as I did, believe me. Sir, there is no place in England (although we have many faults, foolish faults,) where, upon the whole, learning and virtue are held in

such respect as at St. Boniface. Mr. Candid, if you ever come to Camford University, and do me the favour of calling upon me, I shall hope to convince you of this by experience."

The schoolmaster expressed his thanks with heartiness and feeling.

"Now with regard to this boy," continued the inspector, "I am sure that he will be thrown away,—as I perceive at least one other to have been,—if he remain in his present position. A less clever fellow will do his work here to the full as well as he. Now, will you consent to your pupil's being taken from you and sent up to the university as a sub-sizar? It will be the making of the poor lad, I know."

"The person who has assisted him hitherto," replied Mr. Candid doubtfully, "and who might have helped him in such a matter, has lately died."

"Never mind the money part of the business," returned the other; "between ourselves I will take that upon myself. Should the young man fail, the expense will be the least part of the responsibility."

Mr. Candid's somewhat inert eyes shot forth a gleam of admiration; presently however he observed, in a tone of but little hopefulness, "I will tell the lad, Sir, of your kind proposal; but he has much independence of character,—I fairly tell you that I doubt his taking advantage of your offer."

"Independence!" cried the inspector angrily; "and am I not independent myself? Do I ask him to put himself under any personal obligation? I am a Fellow of



St. Boniface; I receive money from that college — to which I owe everything I have — only as its almoner. Why, we shall have the boy refusing a sizarship presently, lest he should become indebted to Henry the Eighth! If I had any time now, I would talk to the lad myself, but our little conversation must cease here, I fear for the present. You will write to me when he has made his decision, if you please, to this address. Good-morning, Mr. Candid.”

“Good-morning, Sir.”

And the two men shook hands with each other very heartily. By the next day's post arrived a letter from the kind inspector, reiterating his offer, and taking pains to show how very little extraneous support would be necessary for a quiet lad at Camford, in addition to the emoluments which his own talents ought speedily to procure him.

“What do you think of it, Robert?” asked the school-master, when he had put his favourite pupil in possession of all these matters.

“What a new conception of “The Last Appeal,” or “The Decision,” would this scene have afforded to any young painter not absolutely given up to love fancies! The youth, broad-browed, conscious of strength, leaning over the open letter full of golden promise, and building in his brain a hundred airy towers of ambition, friendship, fame; with the keen-eyed, world-tossed man regarding him sarcastically, but not without affectionate interest, while his choice was being made.

“The quarter of an hour is up, my lad, and now what

do you think of it?" enquired the schoolmaster for the second time.

Recent events had fostered that bitter notion of antagonism between high and low, which the remembrance of what he had suffered as a dependant in early days, and the miseries he had endured from his social superiors, the gray coats of Senbury, had planted deeply within him. The boy had become at heart a root-and-branch democrat, and not perhaps a less dangerous one, because he was himself quite unaware of the fact.

"Mr. Candid," said he at last, "I had rather decline this kind gentleman's offer; it was a great temptation, but now I think I have overcome it. As it is, I shall never cease regretting that it can never be in my power to repay Lord——"

"Oh that's it, is it? Your hesitation was not then about leaving your pastor and master, at all? You were not thinking of your obligations to *me*, you scapegrace."

"Sir," said the young man gravely, "there are benefits which nothing can repay, and which the recipient has no desire to have lifted from off his grateful heart; such I owe to you. I felt that I was consulting your wishes in this matter, at least as much as my own, or I should not have taken it into consideration at all."

"Right, lad, right!" quoth the delighted schoolmaster, "and you shall go to college yet, bairn, and that for my sake. I have neither kith nor kin; I have worked slowly but surely up the toilsome hill, and there is money lying in bank to John Candid's name which shall be lent to you, —bearing interest, mind ye, and being an investment, and

in no way given as a gift, which is by nae means the custom of my fellow countrymen. One hundred pounds *per annum*.—Tut, tut, mon, dinna ye interfere with my calculations.—One hundred pounds paid quarterly, will be sufficient according to this good gentleman's estimate, and ye shall gang; and if ye want more ye shall have more, by paying for it, laddie, by paying for it; and the whole to be repaid within three, or let us say six years of your getting your fellowship at Bonyfaces,—or at the blessed institution of St. Boniface, as, if it smiles upon you, I am as ready as the priest himself to call it. You must write to the gude man, Robert, to thank him kindly, and to ask to be put in the way in which ye should go,—The Rev. James Stedfast, Privy Council Office,—and now I'm to my work."

"But, Sir, Mr. Candid," cried the young man, as the schoolmaster strode to the door, "suppose I should die before I obtain this fellowship. How will you get back your money?"

"Die! you young dog," replied the Scotchman with affected wrath, "I should like to see you die in my debt; why, I'd put in a *ne exeat*; I'd——"

"Nay, Sir," urged the lad, "but if I really did die."

"Hold your tongue, Sir," cried the indignant schoolmaster; "if you insist upon being that dishonest, why you may die and be——" But the door slammed violently upon the speaker, and shut out the remainder of Mr. Candid's sentence.

In less than three months from the date of this conversation, Robert Birt was pacing the beautiful lime-walk of

St. Boniface. "The wind of a joyful dawn blew free" upon him, and swept away all desponding thoughts as it swept the withered leaves from off the trees. The elastic step, the eyes roving hither and thither, the lips which could scarcely be restrained from breaking into some merry fragment of a tune, showed the lightness of a heart which only bears the burthens of joy and hope. The four-cornered college-cap well became his heavy and somewhat unyouthful brows, and the full-sleeved gown of twenty-four hours' old sat upon his shoulders with all the dignity of a doctor of divinity's twice turned.

The Autumn had been somewhat kept in the background by her young sister Summer, and she in turn was now taking her revenge upon Dame Winter, who was not even visible in the landscape. Those green-robed senators, the Chestnuts, still for the most part wore their mantles upon them; the turf in the paddock, on either hand, was as green as in spring-time, and as grateful (as it seemed) to the stout pony impounded in one of them; who from his style of gait when set in motion, and from his colour, which was uncommon among ponies of flesh and blood,—being black wafers stuck disorderly upon a white ground,—presented the appearance of a rocking-horse. The curving river flowed blithely in the sunshine, under the many bridges, laden as usual with a slow-moving barge or two, a very few light skiffs (for all the men were not "come up" yet,) a number of mathematical papers, and some swans. Across the stream and the smooth-shaven lawn was the long library of St. Boniface; the archway, with the windows over it still darkened with

green leaves if not with flowers ; the wall of the southern court, and the ivy-mantled brewery, where the audit ale is made by a secret process, which the brewer, it is said, is forced by a classical oath to keep inviolate. At all events no one knows it, and it is perhaps to prevent impertinent analyses that occasionally, in bottles sent to friends and not intended for collegiate use, there are found decoctions which would puzzle the chemists as much almost as the interior of the late unfortunate Mr. Cook. It is quite possible, however, that this change may be effected during the journey.

Beyond lay the little college which is called St. Boniface's Hall, but whereat,—on account maybe of its diminutive size,—the St. Boniface men do not however dine ; and farther still Stare Hall, with its apron of trim gardens. To northward stood St. Jude's, the old red rival of St. Boniface, prolific in mathematicians, with its new court fair and slightly toward the south, but the back of which it would be shameful even to write about. Towards this college Robert already gazed with emulous eyes. Behind him and on the other side of the grand elm-girdles, lay the Pound, a circular exercising-ground for the fellows of St. Boniface only, which, although by no means picturesque, was not without its peculiar charm in the sight of the young sub-sizar. The rooks themselves above the swaying chestnuts, made concert that to his well-pleased ears atoned for the absence, from the place, of nightingales. His entrance-examination,—an ordeal of no very awful character,—was not to take place until the following day, so that he had plenty of time to look about him. His in-

terview with his tutor had been as satisfactory as he could have expected ; much more so indeed than Robert was at that time aware of.

The Rev. Ruff Diamant was by no means wont to be so conciliatory to youth as he had been to him, and at this period in particular the great man was accustomed to be peculiarly exacerbated by "early fathers" bringing up their hopeful offspring to be placed under his care. Mr. Stedfast, however, had said a good word for Robert Birt ; and the fact of his being poor and friendless weighed with the really kind-hearted tutor almost as much as his alleged proficiency in the mathematics. Instead of the ordinary rather suspicious stare of the reverend gentleman, and the "Well, Sir, I wish you good-morning," which usually followed it with absolutely indecent haste, it had been : "I am glad to see you, Sir, and I hope you may be an honour to the college." Very comfortable rooms had been assigned to him,—all Camford men say "rooms" in their invitations, although an undergraduate's second apartment is a bedchamber, and a remarkably small one too,—up in the attics, to be sure, but with height and light enough, and comprising an uninterrupted view of the chapel he would have to visit some twelve times in the week ; of the blackened, ancient clock-tower, seeming to have been erected less for time than for eternity ; of the warden's lodge (so that he had ample opportunities of determining upon the improvements which he would make in it when it should come to his turn to live there) ; of the many-windowed hall ; and of the fountain, which sings either very small indeed, or not at all, after the

manner of Hobson's choice, and which is also supplied from the same gentleman's private reservoir.

But how impossible is it to revive one's own impressions of a scene with which we have once become familiar ! How can we depict what St. Boniface appeared to be in the eyes of the new country lad, when we can scarce remember how the grand old pile first glassed itself in our own youthful mind ? Were *we* silently influenced by the remembrance of the many noble spirits who had passed within those ancient walls, some their boyhood, and some their whole existence ? Did we mount those old, well-trodden wooden stairs,—nay, those dinted, worn stone steps,—with consciousness of the “beautiful feet” of those who must needs have gone up before us there, and brought glad tidings to the world of many things ? Here, did we think, trod thoughtfully, with his eyes on every stair, the mighty Newton ? here, with an effort to conceal his lameness, the wild lord, young Byron ? and here, between those two in point of time, but partaking (like the ham in the sandwich) of the qualities of neither, the scholar Porson, with not seldom inebriate gait, and perceiving more steps than there were ?

Alas ! is it likely, thus jesting in cold blood upon the immortals, that we ourselves took thought of any such things ? We can only remember the very lively interest with which the four anonymous figures above the library inspired us at first sight, and the delight with which we heard the explanation that they were “Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and the Use of the Globes !” Age alone, who has not far to look forward, takes his pleasure in the

Past. Maturity—the Feeder—remembering what delights he has let slip, enjoys the Present. Youth—the Dreamer—pants for the Future. Undefined, but far from shadowy to him beckons the bright To Come; and pity, indeed, would it be to avert his eyes from her, since, from no nearer point of view, will she appear one-half so charming.

Cruel change! Transformation far from that anticipated from the play-bill of the imagination, could the gas be on a sudden put out, and the daylight let in upon that beautiful fairy in the extreme perspective at the back of the stage yonder, with short petticoats indeed, but with legs far from good, and her fair complexion all scooped out of the rouge-pot! That time, again, the period of these delicious hallucinations, of which we thought so little while it was passing, will, in its turn, be invested with unreal glories, or properties only glorious by contrast. “Man never is, but always to be blest,” is only a half truth; he never is blest, but it seems to him, through the vista of departed years, that he has been so. Oh, for our own farback youth! Oh, for our own freshman’s term but once again! It cannot be; and while we think on it, tears from the depths of some divine despair well from the heart to glimmer at the eyes, which no hand but the One’s can wipe away.

Happy days—so happy that they cannot have been altogether so wicked as they have been represented to us—days when our heart was light and loving, and we walked in the ways of it, and in the sight of our own eyes; when friends were many and foes were none, and every



month was May. Not only art thou, Camford, engraven upon our reverent heart, with all that belongs to thee in hall and garden, in river and in grove, but even the "level flats" around thee, and the dull cathedral cities that are thy neighbours, are sacred to us likewise for thy sake. Had we money—and that we have not has become a matter (so changed we are) of serious regret to our long graduate mind and paterfamilias spirit—we verily believe that we should invest it, for the sake of auld lang syne, in the "Eastern Counties," the line which now conducts to the Camford of our youth. Never do we see its down express laden in the October term with its freight of freshmen, with all their college joys before them, without a sigh, without a tender reminiscence of the day when we ourselves went up to Camford by the coach, and put up at "The Hoop," that "famous inn."

Happy freshmen! Happy Robert Birt, waking up upon thy first university morning in thine attic in the great court of St. Boniface! Cheerily fell the eight strokes of the clock-tower upon the autumn air, succeeded—astounding to the freshman's ears—by another eight. It had struck sixteen o'clock! The mathematicians in the next college having complained, it is said, of the loud voice in which St. Boniface proclaimed the time, he has since most courteously made a practice of whispering the same information afterwards into their particular ears; with which arrangement, they—having somewhat of the same unwieldly powers as the celebrated *savant*, who cut a little hole in his door for the admission of his kitten, beside a greater one that already existed for the accom-

modation of his cat—have expressed themselves as abundantly satisfied.

Shortly before nine o'clock, large numbers of the newly-arrived began to congregate about the doors of the lecture-rooms, in readiness for their approaching examination. Although not yet absolutely members of the college, they were all in academical costume. The majority wore caps and blue stuff gowns such as Robert Birt's; there being very properly no distinction between the dress of the sizars and the pensioners. Some few, however, had stripes of silver sewn both over cap and gown, which gave a sort of beady appearance by no means becoming to their youthful forms. These were the fellow-commoners, or as they are more familiarly termed, "the spangles," or "empty champagne bottles." Still fewer had tinselled gowns, but were without the caps,—young men of noble birth who were called (sarcastically?) hat-fellow-commoners. Besides these there were one or two enormously full silk gowns, distended by crinoline or other artificial method, each enclosing a live young lord. And this last sort were popularly termed "wind-bags." Among all these there were distinctions at least as marked as those produced by difference of attire.

The public schoolboys,—we beg their pardons,—"the men" from the public schools, herded together, and noisily recommenced the intimacies broken off, perhaps, only by some six weeks of recent holiday. The private school men were knotted in smaller groups. Those from private tutors and district workhouses (one) stood by themselves perforce, and were glad when the babble-

ment ceased as the clock struck nine, and they all streamed off to their different lecture-rooms. Robert Birt, of course, belonged to that presided over by Mr. Ruff Diamant, upon whose "side," that is to say under whose tutorship, he was. That gentleman hurried into the apartment, as was his custom, a little late, and bestowed a nervously shy (some thought a suspicious) glance upon all around. He was accompanied by a personage armed with what appeared to be one leg of a pair of compasses and a venetian blind. An enormous sheet of paper hung over the latter machine, with the names upon it of every St. Boniface undergraduate, and by an indentation opposite to each, this official signified to the authorities the absence from, or attendance at hall, chapel, and lecture-room, of every member of the college. The very freshmen's faces he seemed at once to know by intuition, and—only having to ask their names in one or two instances,—pricked off the whole thirty-two or so in a couple of minutes. In the meantime, the little bundle of printed examination papers upon the tutor's desk had been distributed, and the candidates came at once into their expectations, or were as speedily put out of their misery, as the case might be. We have known a clever fellow to be plucked at an entrance examination at St. Boniface's, through bad preparation and a nature singularly incapable of the mathematics; but there is generally little excuse for failure in any lad of seventeen and upwards. Both at that examination and at another in the afternoon, Robert answered every question satisfactorily; or, as it is technically expressed,

he "floored the paper." This was by no means the fortune of a tall unhealthy-looking young man, his neighbour, whose efforts seemed to be concentrated upon writing his own name, Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks, with great variety of alphabet and extreme elegance of flourish, upon that voluminous foolscap which ought to have been covered with his problems.

"I say," ejaculated this gentleman, in a low whisper, as Robert placed his third completed sheet upon his left hand, "how you are polishing them off there!"

"Less talking, if you please, gentlemen," broke forth Mr. Ruff Diamant, curtly.

"Oh, dash it!" remonstrated Mr. Binks, without moving his lips; "what precious long ears he has! I say, Mr. ———, I can't even read your name at the top of your papers; do for goodness' sake give us a look at a sheet or two. What's 'If two triangles       ?' "

"I must request, gentlemen, that you will make less noise," reiterated the tutor.

"Oh, confound it," soliloquised Mr. Cavendish Binks, driven (it was a very little distance) to his wits' end.

Presently he pushed a little slip of paper over to Robert Birt.

"Please, Sir," it was thus written, "to put your papers on the right side, where I can look at them; you know it isn't as if it was an examination for honours. My squeezing through can't hurt anybody; there's a good chap. I'll tell *you* if I see any mistakes." This last judicious and politic sentence would have made Robert Birt smile at any other time; but although too good-

natured to refuse the poor wretch his request, he did not know what consequences—where so much depended, too, upon keeping out of all scrapes with the authorities—he might entail upon himself in case of detection. He passed his papers over with a sigh.

As soon as that morning's work was finished, Mr. Binks linked himself on to Robert's arm in a perfect fervour of gratitude. "I like you, Birt," he said; "how jolly it is that you and I are always going to sit together. How lucky it is that your name begins with a B. (Mr. Binks was referring to the alphabetical arrangement usual in all university examinations; but he should certainly in fairness have set the good fortune of the coincidence of first letters upon his own side rather than on Robert's.) We have an hour and a half to lunch in before the second event comes off; come to my rooms, old fellow, I have lots of everything; capital old wine, capital cigars; do pray come along."

"Thank you," replied Robert coldly, by no means relishing his companion, and remembering that he had none of these splendid advantages to offer in return, "I think I'll go to my own rooms."

"Well then, I'll come with *you*," said Binks, "and we'll just look over our Horace together, after we've fed."

This being a still less palatable arrangement to the unfortunate Robert, he was obliged in courtesy—for the other was certainly most anxious to be hospitable and friendly—to accede to the first proposal.

Mr. Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks led the way up to an

attic chamber, similar to that of his new acquaintance, where was laid a feast for one in the shape of a pigeon-pie and a pint bottle of champagne.

"These are beastly rooms," observed the host in apology, "I told Ruff Diamant that they would not do for any time; one positively knocks one's head against the roof in certain places; there is Lord Fitzherbert, a relative of mine, in the next court; you should see *his* rooms; that was him—a nobleman, you know—sitting before us in the lecture-room, in the rich silk gown. He's a relative of mine, I think I told you. I know lots of nob and swells, and that sort of thing."

"I don't know anybody of that sort, at all," remarked Robert Birt so drily, that one might have easily imagined a "thank goodness," stuck to the end of it; but the other only heard in the observation a humble confession, into the supposed regrets of which he fully entered.

"Never mind, old fellow, you're a trump, you are, and I'll introduce you. When I get my proper rooms, you shall come and wine with all of them. Here are some pretty good cigars at 58s., and wine that has been in my father's, that is to say, in the cellars at home, this forty years."

A just opened hamper which was lying in the corner with a Camford wine-merchant's name upon it, would have pointed out the extreme unreliability of these remarks to the unhappy guest, if he had not been too disconcerted by them to observe it.

"Sir," said he, "I am sorry to tell you that much of what you have mentioned, is utterly thrown away

upon me ; I aspire to none of it ; it is clear that you are in ignorance of my circumstances, and of my present position. I have just entered St. Boniface as a sub-sizar."

A pause ensued, during which Mr. Binks coloured profusely ; and at length ejaculated with some awkwardness, "Well, Sir, and what of that ? Why, so have I !"

Robert Birt looked at the champagne bottle and the box of cigars, with an air of comic bewilderment. He had not been accustomed to good society, poor fellow, and did not know that one should never express astonishment at anything either by eyes or tongue.

"A little pigeon-pie ?" enquired Mr. Binks, recovering himself ; "that's right ; and while I carve it, please to extract that cork."

Robert essayed to unfasten the complication of wire and string which kept air-tight the precious liquid, and turned its stopper into the most swollen and tortured-looking of all objects, but without success.

"Here, give it to me !" cried the host ; and by a dexterous tap of his knife, he released the foaming captive by the simple means of decapitating its jailor. The two made a very excellent repast in spite of their uncongeniality, and perhaps even by cause of it ; there was no feast of reason to interfere with their more substantial entertainment. Only this thought tormented Robert Birt throughout the meal, and the examination that succeeded it. "Who *is* this wretched young man, and where can I have seen that face before ? With what forgotten misery was it associated, and how long ago ?"

But not until night had arrived, and a dream with it, wherein he was once more the most unhappy of friendless mortals at a mediæval seminary, did the unsatisfactory features of Mr. Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks loom out distinctly upon his mind, as being also those of the nob captain of Senbury Grammar School.







## CHAPTER XVI.

### COLLEGE SETS.

**A**FTER the death of Lady Rexham her trustees were enabled to give her son a considerable allowance, so that he became at once altogether independent of his other noble parent. It is not impossible that his lordship may have calculated upon this fortunate contingency when he agreed so readily to those pecuniary arrangements proposed by the impatient Adolphus; but the young man recked little of that. The being a hat-fellow-commoner with five hundred pounds a-year at St. Boniface, was quite enough to engage the whole of his present attention. He took his private tutor from home along with him, as was then the custom, and seemed really determined upon making a mathematical figure, and distinguishing himself in the Camford Class List, which in the case of an aristocrat like himself was by no means the custom, either then or now. These good intentions were as much applauded by the Rev. Swete Smyler, upon whose "side" he chanced to be, as

actual successes would have been in another man. It would be unfair to state that Mr. Swete Smyler "honeyed to a lord," because that gentleman was to everybody whom he chanced to meet with, as the veriest honey of Hybla. But in the case of a nobleman, there were, it must be confessed, one or two more layers of the pleasant application. Not only did he shake the hand of the Hon. Adolphus Hollis as he entered at the great gate, but he kept on shaking it all the way to his (Mr. Smyler's) own rooms in the Inner Court, where, having occasion for the door-key, he took the captive fingers into his pocket along with his own digits, and finally, when the ten came out again, and were obliged to separate, he shook hands again. During this brief period he had advanced from "Sir," to "My dear Mr. Hollis," and if he had but known his Christian name, would doubtless have called him "Dolly." This manner of his was the more ridiculous since Mr. Smyler was by nature a stern and even morose-looking man, massively built to a height of above six feet, with a broad brow hanging like a penthouse over not very affectionate eyes. Perhaps he was so continually smiling, shaking hands, and doing the civil to the universal world by way of apologising to it for the character of his personal appearance. "I am not the lion I look, dear friends, — you mistake me for the warden,—I am but the Rev. Swete Smyler, at everybody's service, tutor and missionary." We are far from wishing to convey by the last term an idea of Mr. Smyler's having had any experience among the Sandwich Islanders, or in the mining districts; the nakedness of

those lands, or at least of the people who reside in them, setting aside all other considerations, would have been a great deal too much for his nerves. It is reported that, upon the single occasion on which he had accepted the office of proctor, he was led about blindfold, so very disinclined was the Rev. Swete Smyler to receive any moral shock. No; the sphere of his usefulness, the field of his labours, was amongst the Camford undergraduates, and if a lord or a lord's son could be by any means inveigled into the fold, it was of course the greater gain. At the far-back time of which we speak—and doubtless there may have been great changes since then—this aristocratic sort of sinner was particularly hard to catch, and, when caught, we had to rely upon Swete Smyler's word to estimate its value. It must be confessed that the good tutor—who has long since been canonised and removed from this particular sphere—was wont to be hopeful even to enthusiasm in this matter. After Viscount Rexham had been affectionately enquired after by the good man (in tones which would have led a listener who did not know that nobleman, to have believed he was a religious ascetic), and Lady Rexham also, a mistake—through an unpardonable and most unusual neglect of the latest edition of the Peerage, then lying upon the table with corrections up to the present month—which dissolved the Rev. Swete Smyler into tears, that gentleman spoke as follows:—

“And before we part, my dear Mr. Hollis; to meet, I trust, again and again,—may I ask one delicate question?”

"Twenty, if you like," replied the young man, "by all means, Mr. Smyler."

"It is a question which I always ask my young men," said the tutor, impressively; "a question that concerns them more, perhaps, than they may be themselves aware of: Have you, have you a pole-star to which you may direct your wandering eyes?"

A conviction which had been gradually forcing itself upon Mr. Hollis's mind, that Mr. Smyler was mad, began to gain ground very fast indeed.

"Have you, my dear—I think you said Adolphus—have you, my dear Adolphus, such a thing as a virtuous attachment?"

The young man, we are sorry to say, could restrain himself no longer, but burst into a great roar of laughter.

"Because," continued Mr. Swete Smyler, reddening, but still shaking the young neophyte's hand at the opened door, "because, if you have not, my dear young friend, I solemnly warn you, as soon as you conveniently can, *to get one.*"

Doubtless, still more extraordinary than even to Mr. Hollis did this piece of advice appear to the young Lord Courtwell, who had come up to St. Boniface at the same time as his friend. Mydleton was also a fellow-commoner of the same year, and one or two of the old Winton acquaintances of Hollis. Most of all, however, that young gentleman welcomed an unexpected companion in his old friend Legion, with whom the authorities of the Royal Military College had had a disagreement in respect of attire; the gentleman cadet pre-

ferring to wear plain clothes instead of that more splendid raiment provided for him by his Majesty's government. Although warned that he would be dismissed should he again be detected in *mufti*, he despised that warning, and was dismissed accordingly. He refused to stand at "attention," while the commanding officer read the order for his removal; and, moreover, expressed an opinion that the service had experienced a loss rather than himself. So, more in dudgeon than with pleasure, and to the great regret of his companions, he had exchanged the swallow-tails for the toga, the blue and red uniform of Sandwich for the peaceful pensioner's gown of St. Boniface, Camford.

The rank, the buoyant spirits, and free and easy manners of Adolphus Hollis, combined with his really great talents, and reputation as a reader for the highest honours, threw open to the young fellow-commoner all doors of university life. There are "sets" of men, of course, at college, as there are in the greater world; but they are by no means so exclusive and air-tight as they have been represented to be. Very few of even the hardest reading men, in reality confine themselves to jam and bread, or tie wet towels around their foreheads instead of night-caps; and even with these, others associate, equally desirous of fame, but who are not so naturally dull as to require such extraordinary stimulants. These again mix with literary undergraduates, who write for the declamation prizes, perhaps, but are otherwise disaffected to university studies, and who without reference to classical models, became Ciceros (or even

Catilines) themselves, at the debates at the Union. Many of these are connected with the religious party, over which, and always by a special Providence, Swete Smylers have from time to time been raised up to be rulers; others with that smaller band, who hail the Rev. Incense Flexion as their spiritual superior, the gentleman who reproved a little six-year-old charity girl, who asserted in the Sunday class that she was born a Christian, in these remarkable terms:—"Born a Christian! Born! Unhappy child, it is my painful duty to inform you that you are embracing one of the very worst features of Pelagianism." Others again associate with boating-men, with members of the drag, with even doggy men, and patrons of prize-fighters, the lowest of the low; so that, although an S. S. or Saved Sinner (as has been written after more than one Camford name) is not, of course, often found prepared to back himself for money to kill rats with his teeth, he may not impossibly enjoy the acquaintance of some canine hero who is.

It was through this intermixture of society, as well as in consequence of his personal agreeable qualities, that the Hon. Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis lent his countenance to more associations than he could have lent his names to, numerous as they were.

He was elected—to begin with one of the most pretentious—an unregenerate member (that is to say, a subscribing one, but only at present upon trial for his regular admission) of the New Jerusalem Society, which had pledged itself, at whatever cost, to convert at least one Jew *per annum*. The meetings were held twice a term

in Mr. Swete Smyler's own rooms, and during the October term the convert (for there was rarely more than one of them) was publicly exhibited. A curtain veiled him from all eyes until the company had finished their tea,—without which, of course, the edifying work could not, consistently with custom, be carried on,—and then solemnly rising to slow music, presented the interesting object of so many subscriptions, with a complexion warranted to be genuine Hebrew, and “one of those noses, peculiar to people called Levi and Moses.”

“Observe,” Swete Smyler would say, “the sandwich in that good man's right hand, which he is devouring with such apparent relish ; it is a ham sandwich, my beloved friends, a ham sandwich ; and yet, not very long before this blessed day, this brand from the burning was a Jew.”

It was maliciously stated by the Incense Flexion party (who would, however, say anything against the New Jerusalemites) that the gentleman referred to had been not only a Jew not very long before, but that he was a Jew again not very long afterwards, having been recognised opposite to their metropolitan church at Knightsbridge, on a Sunday, with three old hats upon his head, and selling cedar pencils. The Flexionites had tea at their meetings too, and if their days happened to fall upon the Eve of the blessed St. Ermengarde, or other rubrical notoriety, they had beer also ; and indeed, it must be confessed that some of the subjects upon which they debated were uncommonly dry, and needed it. Mr. Hollis, in his second year, was weak enough to

take his friend Legion to one of the congregations of this society, when the topic under discussion was the Athanasian Creed. Incense Flexion himself, in a buttonless waistcoat and M. B. coat, was monotoning to the company his "views" upon this occasion. He said that the Creed divided itself into sixteen heads, and he went remorselessly through every one of them.

Preston asked for tobacco, which was refused him, and then took resolutely (for it was an Eve) to beer. When the chairman at length sat down, the guest rose, although with difficulty, and with his views decidedly indistinct.

"Question," said he (meaning 'the question,' but he was in a state beyond definite articles), "question seems to me—resolve itself—two heads. 1st. If it's true I'll be d——d; and 2ndly. I'll be d——d if it's true."

This unfortunate antithetical opinion of his friend caused Mr. Hollis's name to be erased from the list of this association altogether.

"The Disciples," as *the* intellectual club of St. Boniface is denominated, was limited to a certain number of members, and therefore could not receive Mr. Hollis until there was a vacancy, some time after he had proved himself worthy of the honour of being enrolled among them. If nobody exoteric believed in, or could quite discover the superhuman intellectualism of this chosen band, they had, at all events, discovered it themselves, and believed in it implicitly. Questions that still agitate the external world, by their obscurities or their contradictions, were settled, if not off-hand, at farthest after a week's study, by this enlightened body.



The origin of sin, the squaring of the circle, the meaning of a university sermon, would, if proposed as problems, have been explained most satisfactorily (to the members), at a single sitting of this celebrated society for the propagation of belief in themselves. We believe it must be a "disciple" of St. Boniface who places those astounding advertisements in the *Times* newspaper headed, "All Discovered! Poverty, Disease, and Death Averted! Salt, Salt, Salt!" They had an admirable contrivance for spreading their fame abroad, which spoke, however, more perhaps for their ingenuity than for their love of truth—and yet TRUTH, philosophic TRUTH (with an immense T), and independent of creeds, was their idol. They circulated without a blush, the report, that every man of mark who had ever been at St. Boniface, had been one of themselves: and they found allusions to their brotherhood in every work that these departed great ones published.

"You may see a picture of us," say they, in these modern times, "in the *In Memoriam*, in the psalm beginning, 'I passed beside the reverend walls.'"

When this particular work of our own becomes the rage (as it must needs become among all the educated classes), the disciples of St. Boniface will remark—"The author was one of us, although not our best man by any means." Their best man has never yet been discovered.

The armadillo is not more impervious to satire, nor the fabled whiffle-whaffle more dexterous at evasion, than is this intellectual circle who sit above the thunder, with their legs up, and a pipe in their mouths. Their blood-

less and serene appearance, their splendid indifference to all sublunary matters—except that they eat most prodigiously at supper—is rivalled singularly enough by another St. Boniface society of a quite opposite character, called the Mutton Chop Club. Unless Hollis had had the great good fortune to have a family seat in Rookshire, or in one of the adjoining counties, he would never, despite all his talents, have been elected into the M. C. C. It was kept as exclusive and restricted—upon equally sensible grounds too—as some Oxford fellowships, and with pretty much the same results. The M. C. C. were perfectly aware that they were not distinguished for wisdom or for learning, and were by no means distressed at the knowledge. All of them were wealthy, many of them were embryo hereditary legislators; so what should they want of wisdom and learning, when so very little of that sort of thing was expected of them? But it was a remarkable club for all that.

Wandering about late in St. Boniface cloisters, with his thoughts upon the many generations of men who had wandered therein before, and awakened those same solemn echoes, Robert Birt was once witness to a very startling phenomenon. He saw a youth arrayed in hat and gown above, but beneath in a yellow coat and breeches of the same colour, white silk stockings and buckles to his shoes, glide slowly past him up a neighbouring stair. He had bestowed on Robert such a stony look, as he went by, as might well have been given by one dead and cold for many a year. His dress was decidedly antecedent to the nineteenth century. The ghost

seer subsequently learned however, that this apparition was as far as possible from being a spirit, having been bound upon a mission to eat mutton chops that night, and drink port wine exclusively, as a member of the M. C. C. Mr. Hollis was also a member of the Shakespeare Club, assembling once a-week, whose evenings, it was whispered, were devoted occasionally to Beaumont and Fletcher, and even to the wicked Wycherly; of the "Rummy Cockatoos," who met in their surplices for the more impressive interchange of *bon mots* and epigrams (and a very agreeable society it was); of the St. Boniface Oratorical Association, which was devoted to debate, and formed a sort of nursery garden to "The Union," affording less trying opportunities over pine-apple and claret for the display of eloquence, than did the crowded Hall of Elocution in which the larger society held its sittings. He belonged also to the Second St. Boniface Boat Club, whose members are professed idolators of their own institution, and hero-worshippers of Second St. Boniface men only. Should you have chanced, at any meeting of that extensive society, amidst the squeaking of coxswains and the hoarse accents of "strokes," to speak of any great man's achievements, they would not have diverted public attention from the account Blisters was giving of "the scratch fours" in the least degree; but did you but casually mention that your hero was a member of the Second St. Boniface, a perfect tempest of cheers would have been the response. Men belonging to other boat-clubs do say in these times, that it is unsafe to go in for a fellowship against Second St. Boniface men, when

Blisters happens to be appointed one of the examiners. Freemasons are not one-half the brothers that these are, and "thick as thieves" is a totally inadequate expression for the strictness of their social union.

Half a score other such Camford clubs might be described, wherein the young fellow-commoner enjoyed, or could have enjoyed many a pleasant hour, redolent it may be of cigars and even of punch, but rosy with friendship, full of mirthful talk, high speculations upon "Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute ;" hours which in the years to come he was fated perhaps to look back upon with regret, even amidst the undoubted but somewhat elephantine wisdom of the House of Peers itself. Something there is in "the garlands dipped in wine" (it cannot be in the wine itself, which is generally execrable,) that makes the convivialities of youth succeed, as those in after-life rarely do, although assisted by far more elaborate decorations. The port may be older, the champagne better iced, but still there is that wanting which we had abundantly, when—— But unhappy "WHEN, that marks the change 'twixt Now and Then," let us not speak of thee ! Even from a boating supper-party there is a something better to be extracted than that headache which is so surely brewing for the succeeding morning ! It is well to sit with "the Disciples," even although Longimanus must needs be reading his essay upon the duality of being,—Longimanus, who never thinks of any creature except number one. Better to listen, wine-glass in hand, to *Juvenis* declaiming upon the solidarity of the peoples, at the St. Boniface Oratorical Society, than to the same

but very different man, who has changed his name by letters patent from King Time to *Senex*, and nightly sits upon the ministerial benches at St. Stephen's. Where be his gibes, his flashes of merriment now? Our very gorge rises at him, for has he not a post in the Tape and Sealing-wax office, which was to have been given to ourselves? Reverend father in the upper chamber, enduring that soapy and sopiferous harangue of thy episcopal brother (whom thou hatest as much as may become so exalted a Christian) for so many weary hours, wouldst not delight to exchange thine oppressive lawn for the easy surplice, habited in which thou wast wont to bring of old thine epigrams (and very neat they were) to the friendly and applausive circle of the "Rummy Cockatoos?" Minister of state, having to "remember Dowb" on one side, and to steer clear of the newspapers upon the other, do you not regret those happy hours, when you were the narrow-minded, but acute Polonius, only in the play?

One club, however, at Camford, the Corintheum, of which Hollis was at once elected a member, we never heard of any man's being regretful about. It is sometimes called "The Nonchalance," and sometimes the "Nil Admirari," but under whatever name it goes it is alike unsavoury. Out of the lofty windows of its place of meeting, any fine afternoon, you may see the last specimens of the fashion,—for the members of the "Nil Admirari" have by no means an objection to *being* admired,—leaning on their elbows and sucking their canes. The *Daily Mammoth* and the *Weekly Megatherium*, lie untouched upon the great table, not because they

know how stupid these are, but because they abominate all reading. The "Mysteries of Buckingham Palace" are lying in the corner there sufficiently thumbed, but that is mainly because they are so profusely illustrated; the pictures being almost as indelicate as the letter-press. Besides a few books of an equally racy character, they have their betting books; they are full of information also from "a fellow that ought to know" about the health of the "Brother to Mozambique," who is the first favourite for the Derby. They impart intelligence of this kind to one another with such unruffled countenances, that they might very well (except for their eyes, which are more fishy than the Baker Street ones,) have come straight of Madame Tussaud's establishment. It is not sulkiness, it is not entirely vacuity, it is not in any great degree pride, which gives them this solemn appearance,—but it has its origin, we are given to understand, partly in blood, and partly in money. The members are all somewhat aristocratic, and almost all wealthy. Those who have less blood make up for it by having more money, and those who have less money have more blood; these latter favour the splendid weekly entertainments of their plebeian friends with their twenty times lineally transmitted countenances, and supply them with the smile of half-a-dozen generations in return for their old wine. The members of the Corinthæum form in after life a considerable portion of that political Buffer of safest density which resists so stoutly all the shocks of change. It is puppyism such as theirs which, the keen wit has told us, grows up to dogmatism. Their influence in the university

world is evil, and not small. They are the sworn enemies of earnestness in every form and shape. At everything wise and good,—not being clever enough to sneer,—they shrug their shoulders.

To do our young fellow-commoner justice, he not only at once discovered how very foolish they were, but after a little while he told them so in so many words, and left them. Before that, however, he conceived the pleasant design of inveigling Legion into this charming coterie, and got Mydleton to propose him as a member, lest his friend should suspect the snare. Mydleton called upon this involuntary candidate for so much honour, and told him what he had done. Legion had heard what the club was like, but did not wish to be ungracious to his proposer whom he knew but slightly. Luckily Mydleton left him a loophole, exactly such as suited him, for a means of exit.

“My dear Sir,” observed Mydleton, “you will excuse me, for it is a rule of the club and no idea of my own—(he needed not to have told Legion that)—but will you refer me to the page in the—the—Peerage where your family is to be found? It is only a matter of form you know, but Hollis did not happen to mention it.”

“Hollis!” said Legion; a flood of light at once breaking in upon him.

“No,” resumed the other, “he did not mention it, but of course I knew it was all right, since he proposed you—that is to say, got me to do so, which I assure you I was most pleased ”

“Well, Mr. Mydleton,” said Legion, gravely, “I am

not exactly sure what you would call 'in the Peerage ; but perhaps the Corinthum would kindly waive the letter of their enactment in       "

"Irish family, baronetage," broke in the other, excessively distressed ; "almost anything will do."

"Well, no," answered the candidate, thoughtfully, "I can't say that I have any pretensions even on these grounds ; but my aunt, now, down at Limerick, *she* has a title."

"Capital !" cried the proposer ; "your great grandmother would have been better, but your aunt—to confess the truth—will make you as near to nobility as most of us."

"I never had a grandmother," replied Legion, sighing, "but my aunt married very well ; an opulent greengrocer, who went up with a dep . . ."—Mydleton was already half way down the stairs, but Legion threw up the window instantly, and rasped the ears of the member of the Corinthum as he went down the street—"a deputation from his native city, and was knighted, Sir, knighted in mistake for the mayor, by the lord lieutenant, when he was drunk."

Singular as is the metamorphosis of almost all youths after their first term at the university, that of the members of the Corinthum, and of their more vulgar imitators, is by far the strangest, and a transformation, unlike the others in this respect, that it is decidedly one for the worse. These young men were of course not cradled in refrigerators ; they came up much like the rest of the lads from public schools, full of animal spirits and universal



friendliness, free-limbed and eager-eyed, and almost entirely unacquainted with the restraints of gloves or straps. Swipey, for instance, a Wintonian friend of Hollis's, who had ears like beetroot, and loved nothing better than ginger beer up to his latest moments at that famous school,—where he had the greatest possible difficulty in acquiring “the tone,”—had so sloughed his character during three months of Corinthum life, that he was scarcely recognisable by his friends when the vacation came. Not only did he voluntarily submit to become a close prisoner within his own shirt collars, so that he could turn neither to right nor left, and did he array himself at all times as though he were about to be led forth to the hymeneal altar ; but he had lost every vestige of interest in all terrestrial matters whatever. Not (certainly) that he was grown to be spiritually minded, or had fallen into the metaphysical stage, or had turned out to be a philosopher of any kind, or had been elected one of the “Disciples,” but simply that he had suddenly discovered himself to be “used up” before he had been of any use at all, and *blasé* without having had the least experience.

He had come to Solomon's conclusion, by some exceedingly short cut through somebody else's premises, that there was nothing new under the sun (whereas, if he had but been aware of it, everything that was worth knowing was new and strange enough to him.) “Nothing was new, nothing was true, and everything was a bore.” No matter, whether cricket, or dinner, or Church, or State, or even the Leger was under discussion in his

presence, Swipecy "didn't seem to care." He did not even rightly know whether his favourite dog (which he now pronounced *doag*) was dead or alive, and he had acquired a method of looking sternly at harmless passers-by, which was inexpressibly affected and ludicrous. Yet, six months before might this Wonder have been seen devouring toffy out of a hand-cart, and positively gluttonous over apples and stale jam tarts. Poor Swipecy had had much to suffer, too, before he could acquire this accomplishment of serene indifference. It was all very well for Lord Yornoway, who gave the Nil Admirari tone at Camford in those days, and whom, being naturally inane and sickly, it suited well enough; but for the athletic Swipecy to ape such distinguished manners, was as though a male rhinoceros should adopt the superfluous effeminacies of nail scissors and smelling salts. Nevertheless, by the time the poor lad has become of age, and lounged into his property, his Corintheum training will have done to him far worse than causing him, perhaps, to anticipate a few thousand pounds.

The society of quite another order of persons would, however, have drawn Hollis away from the Nil Admirari, even if he had been less disinclined to the club than he really was; and this was that of the fellows of St. Boniface themselves. By right of being a fellow-commoner, he enjoyed the privilege of sitting up at the high table, among those who, at the other university, are called the dons. The advantage of this arrangement does not certainly lie upon the side of the fellows.

It is not to the credit of the college that the privilege

of dining with its authorities, and at a table superior to that of the other undergraduates, should be bought with money, or with the value of the plate which certain favoured young gentlemen\* bestow upon St. Boniface when they "go down." Many times, when we have sat in those uppermost seats, and regarded the massy spoons with the noble or wealthy names on them of those who "gave them for a gift" to good St. Boniface for ever; we have said (but to ourselves, be sure, for Lord Albert Front de Bœuf and Dives Smith, Esq., future donors, were certain to be both within hearing), "You cost these poor fellows a good deal though, gifts though you be." "*Virtus vera nobilitas*" was running round the rim of our plate, as a collegiate motto should, with *nobilitas*, however, at a very considerable distance behind *virtus*. "*Virtus vera nobilitas*," repeated we, thoughtfully (for we had well-nigh forgotten our Latin), "does it mean that virtue is the true nobility?" Then we remembered how that the last word of a Latin sentence is always the one of the most importance, and translated it aright—"Nobility is the true virtue." You are honest, dear St. Boniface, at all events, but you are likewise most incontestably snobbish. Don't you see how these illegitimate sons of yours interrupt the flow of conversation amongst your other offspring who have been begotten in a lawful manner? not indeed as the presence of boys sometimes, on account of their innocence (certainly not that), restrains the stories of their seniors at dessert time, but as the animal restrains, and must ever restrain, the intellectual.

\* The institution of fellow-commoners has now (1870) been abolished.

"They will not effect any change in my true sons," say you, "for I have most admirably educated them."

Perhaps not, you dear old creature, but neither will your sons effect any change in them. Don't let them flatter themselves to any such absurd extent. Lord Yornoway, notwithstanding that he sat next to your warden, was almost bored to death (for he told us so) by the stupendous conversation of that omniscient man. Through this arrangement of yours, the Hon. Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis also made one of the greatest mistakes possible. He was communicating to one of your lawful sons (Whitlove) the last good thing of his friend Legion's—for to that young gentleman Hollis was everlastingly playing Boswell—(the which, Mr. Whitlove was fully capable of appreciating, St. B., insomuch as he was president of the Rummy Cockatoos himself, at a later period, too, than we should quite like to disclose to you, as his father)—and this was it.

"Do you know," whispered the fellow-commoner, "what is the real test of regeneration?"

"No," replied Whitlove, with his eyes twinkling furtively, but otherwise engaged exclusively upon his plum pudding (with that particular sauce of yours, St. B., which we love so well). "No; how should I?"

"It is the being born with a caul," replied the young man in an ecstasy.

"What was that, Mr. Hollis?" observed the Rev. Swete Smyler, across the table, "I did not quite catch it."

Again, Lord Courtwell dared not open his mouth before Toddy, the man who has discovered that we are not

warmed by the sun at all, as has been so long and generally supposed, but by a fixed star, which will not come into the telescopic range of the unlearned vulgar for a billion and a half of years. And what is the good of Toddy talking to *him*?

Mydleton sits looking at the sub-warden as if fascinated, like the guest of the Ancient Mariner, by those glittering eyes, wondering whether there was anything which he did not know, and thinking how strange it must seem to one to feel so clever. Don't you think it would be a great deal more agreeable for both these classes to part company, beloved St. Boniface? You have surely got enough spoons by this time, and need not to accept those silver implements—one of which, by-the-bye, each of these young gentlemen is said to have in his mouth when born—from fellow-commoners any more.

Do we love you less, St. Boniface, because we speak so freely? No, indeed; nothing but kindness and friendship have we ever received from you; nothing but love and honour shall you have in return from us, as long as we live, "*Rien—excepté la vérité.*" Oh yes, let us by all means speak the truth and shame the Radicals. Still, then, with regard to this high table of yours; are you aware that, while your sons, legitimate and otherwise, are feasting, two of your young grandsons, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, are kicking their heels in the draughty stone passage between your dining-hall and your kitchens yonder?

Lord Yornoway has very often seen in winter time inquisitive eager faces pushed through the folding-doors,

and then withdrawn in disappointment, and many times he has determined to ask what that could mean, only he was picking his teeth at the moment, and afterwards forgot it.

“We are the two scholars, your lordship,” they might say, “waiting until your lordship shall have concluded your repast, when we shall enter and approach the table, to give thanks to God that your lordship has enjoyed it. We perform a vicarious duty, somewhat analogous to that of whipping boys. We shall presently go through a dramatic dialogue in the Latin tongue, which your lordship will not understand, and this is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as it is your lordship’s grace, and not *our* grace, which we are discoursing.” Would it not be courteous, not to say the merest civility, St. B., to ask these couple of grandsons to dine at your high table upon these occasions? At all events, give them a glass of wine after their exertions, for the sake of Christian charity. Your grace, remember, is a most uncommonly long one. As for the undergraduates, you know that you do not venture to ask them to wait for it; they have one before meat, but afterwards—you well understand that such a thing would be a satire.

With regard to the admission of fellow-commoners at the high table, we must admit that the case of our friend Hollis was exceptional. Most of the fellows liked him, and he liked all the fellows. Not only in hall and combination chamber, but at social meetings in their own rooms, he was a welcome and delighted guest. He had never mixed in a society every way so charming as theirs.

The popular notion of the conversation and opinions of college dons, he found (as far as those of St. Boniface were concerned) to be entirely false and unfounded. Fast undergraduates, who, except at examination times, or on occasions when they need to be reprov'd for breaches of discipline, never behold their college authorities, disseminate naturally enough, when they "go down," disagreeable impressions of them; but all youths, who, having anything of worth in themselves, have been desirous of cultivating the acquaintance of the fellows of St. Boniface, must have come, we are quite confident, to an entirely different conclusion. The combination room of that college might be called, and with the best interpretation, the Hall of Free Speech. Providing that it be becomingly uttered, and does not sin against the broad principles of good taste, any opinion whatever, delivered in that place, has fair play, and courteous attention given to it. Out of it, since that time of our friend Hollis, have gone many into the great world, carved for themselves names, and procured for themselves riches; but he always preferred to think of them as he first knew them, sitting in that smaller chamber looking to the west, whether in the winter-time around the comfortable horse-shoe table, or in the summer with the windows open, looking upon those cool stone cloisters, and that fresh green turf below. There is just the least tinge of—not restraint, but—over-courtesy there, perhaps in consequence of the continual presence of guests, but this is far from unbecoming to the venerable place. In the various private rooms to which the company adjourns afterwards,

there is by no means any drawback of this kind. Nor, then, if it be during the May term, is the crystal cobbler wanting, and the taper straw ; or, in any term, the bottle of a thousand cobwebs, and the Havannah, golden-headed begetter of dreams, and nourisher of pleasant talk.







## CHAPTER XVII.

### FRIENDS IN NEED.

**I**T must be confessed, while Dives was up at his high table in St. Boniface's hall, that Lazarus was waiting for the crumbs outside the door; that while the fellow-commoner was feasting, the sub-sizar was compelled to wait for the unconsumed viands, until the great men had gone up to their combination room. When the meats did come to the sizar's table, the fat thereof was in buttons, the pudding in gouts of suet. The silver forks, to obtain which the college undergoes so much, were substituted for steel ones. This was, perhaps, compensated by the fact that the tumblers, on the other hand, were rarely changed; and should Lazarus happen to be the water-drinker, which Dives would fain have been at a subsequent period, he got it with a beery flavour: it was not the rose itself, but it had been in the company of the rose. The Gyps and the waiters then retired into the great bay-windows, for purposes of conver-

sation, while the scullery-girls came in to wait upon those gentlemen at St. Boniface who were poor. We believe some of these things are changed, but certainly thus they were *temp. Rob. Birt*, of which time we are speaking. So far, however, from his being surprised at these degrading circumstances, he would have been disappointed, and not altogether pleased, had there not been some similar unpleasanties. His wrath against "the upper ten thousand" needed nursing in the somewhat Republican atmosphere of Camford life. He was in want of an insult or two to keep it warm. Nobody had cut him, because he was a sub-sizar, yet. Even the one or two Wintonians whom he had met casually, did not treat him worse than they did other folks, in entirely confining their conversation to reminiscences of their school life. They always,—in consequence, perhaps, of some occult ingredient in "the tone,"—did that. Nine men out of ten whom he met did not know that he was a sub-sizar, and the tenth man (with the rarest exceptions) did not care whether he was or no. (This is different, however, in the case of the fellow-commoners, who, like so many gaudy fly-catchers, attract with their tinsel infinite numbers of snobbish undergraduate youth.) The kindness of his tutor, of his lecturers, of every one in authority, indeed, had touched Robert Birt's heart. He could not at all sympathise with Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks in his hatred of the governing body of St. Boniface.

"Why, dash it, Sir," cried that young gentleman, as the pair were cooling their heels together in company of many of their own order, in the stone passage above re-

ferred to, "how dare they to insult me in this manner? a set of low-born scoundrels!"

"Who?" said Birt, who was looking through the swing doors, with a saturnine expression of countenance, at Lord Courtwell.

"Oh, the fellows, of course," said Binks; "who are they? why, nobodies! Who were their ancestors, I should like to know?"

"Why should you like to know?" asked Robert unconcernedly; "do, pray, observe the warden explaining the new theory of attraction to his lordship, yonder. I know his new theory-of-attraction-look quite well; but it's all theory, you see, for it don't attract Lord Courtwell."

"Aye, who *is* the warden? tell me that," cried Binks triumphantly.

"Why, one of the greatest men in England, Sir, and perhaps not one of the worst," replied the other coolly.

"Dash his greatness!" cried Binks; "he had the impertinence to turn me off our own bridge yesterday, telling me it was not built for me to loiter upon. He was at a miserable village-school, Sir."

"Pooh!" answered Birt; "what if he was? He did not pay the extra two-pence for manners there, that's all; everybody knows that little omission of his. Come, they've done at last; his lordship has nodded, and the warden flatters himself that he has made him intelligent, whereas, another minute of the theory would have sent him to sleep."

At chapel, also, it was an arrangement both discourteous and unnecessary, which forced the sizars of St. Boniface to herd together up in a particular corner, and not to mix with the others; but there were anomalies in that house of worship of a much more outrageous character than that. The noblemen and titled youths sat in the seats of honour next the warden, in a superior place to that of the fellows, and high above the seats of the scholars. It is only by courtesy, we believe, that the hat-fellow-commoners remove their hats at all in the chapel of St. Boniface. After the service there was an exhibition which seemed not a little disgraceful to Robert Birt's unsophisticated mind; that of the gray sub-warden, one of the most celebrated men in Europe, waiting cap in hand until the young lords should leisurely descend from their perches, and lead the way out of chapel. He upon whom, long ago, "reverence and the silver hair" had descended, following the footsteps of young Vice!

"I never see Yornoway going before our sub-warden," Legion used to say, "without thinking of the dog which (probably) led the blind Belisarius; only that it is the puppy that in this case is blind, or at least wears an eye-glass, and by no means our keen-eyed philosopher." Independently and in despite of these great blemishes, the spectacle of St. Boniface's chapel upon the eve of a saint's day, was impressive enough. Several hundred youths, the future hope, not only of Camford, but even of England itself, arrayed in full white surplices, with choristers, scholars, fellows, all in white also; an assemblage to all appearance of saints ("with crowns on their heads, and

palms in their hands complete," said the elastic Legion, whose mission it was to supply *facetie* wholesale to the university, without any reservation of subject); and indeed, taking the congregation as a whole, it was a very creditable one,

All Christendom, besides, did not hold more sincerely religious men than some who were there. Because we have laughed at the weaknesses of Mr. Swete Smyler, let it not be supposed but that he was a thoroughly good, kind man after his fashion. And there were many of his disciples like unto him. When those five hundred turned at the Creed to eastward, as one man, be sure there were other than mere posture-makers among them, who yet attached importance to the turning; many of those Flexionites were sound at heart as bells, and loved the poor. Several even among the fastest of the undergraduates joined in the entreaty not to be led into temptation, with all their soul. Not seldom, reading men, with ailing mothers and penniless sisters at home, were strengthened not a little for their pious efforts, as we have reason to know, in "good St. Bonyface, hys chapelle." It is true that one might sometimes have caught scraps of verbal communication during an anthem, which could scarcely be said to be relevant to the subject in *recitative*; might have heard even the hired voices themselves, discoursing during *chorus* upon rather sublunary matters, which is an accident, however, as Mr. Barham has informed us, that will happen in even the best regulated choirs, and is in a manner inseparable from "prayer by machinery;" we all know, or ought to

know, his celebrated chanting story of "Oh, lawks, here's a precious lark ! the soot has fallen down the chimney and spoilt the Sunday's mutton ! Never mind ; wipe it dry with a towel, and nobody will find it out," arranged for three voices. There was a vast deal of earthly conversation carried on in "Iniquity Corner" without doubt, where the untitled Corinthian gentry were wont to congregate ; and a great number of men there were, it is equally certain, who cared for nothing else but the magnificent music ; still, had there been no music, we have no means of judging that they would have been more devout. Upon the whole, the congregation in St. Boniface's chapel was a good one ; and a large one it was, of course, since the deans had the power of "gating" for non-attendance. A vacant sizarship occurred almost immediately after Robert Birt went up, and he at once stepped into it. His *lib* (which is short Latin for an allowance for clothes, we believe), his *stip* (abbreviation for pocket-money), and his *præter* (of which no man knoweth more of the interpretation than that it has something to do with "staying up in the Long"), combined, now produced him an annual income of sixty pounds ; or rather, it defrayed about that amount of his college expenses.

When he came to bid good-bye to his tutor at the end of his first term, previous to dividing the vacation between his two kind friends Mr. Candid and Mr. Pluckit, who had insisted upon his taking a Christmas holiday, a great surprise awaited him.

"By-the-bye," said Mr. Ruff Diamant, casually, "here

is the money for your private tutor, Mr. Birt, you have been reading hard with him, I trust?"

"Money for my private tutor? there must be some mistake," said Robert; "from whom, Sir?"

"I really can't tell you," said Mr. Ruff Diamant; "several of our fellows send me and the other tutors money for this purpose; to be given, not to you in particular, but to any gentleman who is working well up here, and has need of it. They never learn on whom it is bestowed, or wish to learn."

"But I should like to know who *they* are, if you please, Sir," said Robert with a heightened colour.

"Mr. Whitlove for one, then; he always does it; Mr. Swete Smyler, before he was made tutor, since which, he has of course opportunities of his own of exercising a wise discretion; Mr.—— but I have no right to tell you all this; that is well, Sir; there is no disgrace in accepting gifts from donors such as these; I took them myself once upon a time, and very useful they were to me. Your classical lecturer tells me that he thinks it a pity that you should not read for double honours; Mr. Swaysive says you have great taste."

Mr. Swaysive was at that time the most recently appointed of the St. Boniface lecturers, but there were none more clear and elegant. To sniggle, to make a noise, or even to be wilfully inattentive, were practices very rare among the young gentlemen over whom he presided; not that his elucidations (however ingenious in themselves) of somebody's text, or his apt parallels to the expressions of an ancient author, delicately culled from

out some modern verse-garden, could alone have kept them quiet, or riveted their thoughts; but the graceful address and manners of the man, which seemed to say so plainly, "I am doing my very best for you, just as though you were the most accurate of scholars; if you are unacquainted with Greek, it is possible that you may, at all events, know how to appreciate English. I trust to keep up your attention; as to those noises which now and then I cannot but hear, I am content to believe them to be the wind shaking the casements, for I am addressing gentlemen, and my friends, and not schoolboys."

Greek, however, is to some a very difficult language—(we confess that up to the present hour, and after a brilliant university career, that we ourselves never feel comfortable in attacking even the most elementary work in the tongue of the land of the cypress and myrtle)—and stupid undergraduates, it seems, must needs buy "cribs," or British versions of the classics. They are held in the lap by those who use them, while translating from the original upon the desk, and considerable dexterity of hand and eye is required for the performance of the double duty. Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks attempting on one occasion to perform this feat, applied himself too exclusively to the crib, and getting presently involved in inextricable confusion, announced that the Athenian fleet had been entirely destroyed by elephants.

"Nay, Mr. Binks, I don't think our author tells us that," interrupted the silvery voice of the lecturer, "if you will be good enough to confine your attention to the book on your desk, you will perceive that they were pre-



served from that unusual calamity by the simple "intervention of a full stop."

Such was Mr. Swaysive's severity. His lecture-room was the fullest in St. Boniface, and yet we much doubt whether he ever "gated" a single youth (that is to say, compelled him to be within the college walls every night at 10 P.M.) for slack attendance. Sometimes, in Robert Birt's solitary rambles, he had met this gentleman, also solitary, upon horseback, and, from a mutual salute, and a "good-morning," they had got on to a slight acquaintance. Robert Birt especially admired Mr. Swaysive, as being a person with gifts such as he himself could by no means lay claim to,—one who, possessing great mental powers, had, nevertheless, all the ease and gracefulness of those who had nothing but ease and gracefulness to boast of. Full, indeed, of admiration of all who belonged to good St. Boniface, Robert Birt went down to Rookshire to vex Mr. Candid (who was unwilling to accord much praise to what he believed to be an effete institution), and to delight Mr. Pluckit, who was a St. Boniface man himself. That gentleman had something to tell Robert which rather discomposed him.

"I had this letter from Cousin James Field," said the clergyman, a day or two after his guest's arrival, "and I think it right to show it to you."

The part that related to Robert ran thus :—"I am truly pleased to hear of the young man's diligence, and of the prospects which seem to be opening out for him. The friend of whom I wrote to you some time ago, is quite willing to bear his part in defraying the expenses of the

lad up at the university, so let me know what is the sum of money per annum proposed to be expended."

"Then it was not Lady Rexham who has been my benefactress of late years, after all," said Robert, very gloomily.

"She did not know of your needs," replied Mr. Pluckit, assuringly; "you will see if you read further. Field, your godfather, thought it would be better to keep all quiet; it is he who was and is your friend, of course—such a real good fellow, that I envy the doctors their possession of him; he should have been one of us, only that he would have shamed us so. What are you doing, Robert?"

"I am stealing paper out of your blotting-book, Mr. Pluckit; I am going into my own room to write to Mr. Field; which I ought to have done so long, long ago. What must he think of my not caring to know who my benefactors were, so long as I was provided for somehow?"

Robert remained in his retirement a considerable time; he sat thinking of the many kind hands from whom he had received even pecuniary benefits in spite of, and, in some cases, even unknown to himself. How impossible he had found it to maintain the independence which he was for ever thirsting after! Was it indeed independence, or merely a proud isolation from all friendly help, that he had been so desirous of? Had he been ever asked to disgrace himself—to alter, or even modify a single opinion of his own by those whom he regarded not only with gratitude, but with love? If he had ever accepted—since he was old enough to understand the nature of it—

the bounty of such a man as Lord Rexham, or the offers of assistance of young Hollis, he would, indeed, have had bitter reason for repentance ; but what were these large debts which he owed to Mr. Candid and to Mr. Pluckit, but practical friendships,—outward symbols of the affection which they really entertained for him? Did he feel one jot less grateful to Mr. Stedfast because he had refused the generous offer of the kind inspector? or ought his spirit, since it piqued itself on being so sensitively delicate, to be less weighed down with obligation on that account? All good intentions of kind-hearted folks towards him were, then, to make him uncomfortable. The conduct of his nameless benefactor at Camford was, from this point of view, little less than sheer insult ; the long line of benefits he had received from Mr. Field, one chain of galling fetters. He acknowledged to himself that he had been classing the generous deeds of kindly hearts in the same category with those of ostentatious display, or of that meanest munificence which expects servility in return for it.

In a mood rendered somewhat more tranquil by these reflections, he then wrote to his godfather, expressing his fervent gratitude for all that the good doctor had done for him, and his own hopes of proving himself worthy of that assistance, but declining further aid at present upon the very reasonable ground of not requiring it. Not forgetting, meanwhile, at Mineton, to offer a substantial proof of his gratitude to Thomas Trot, the carrier, who had been the means of his escape from Senbury, he also made up his mind to call upon the surgeon on the first

opportunity after he should effect anything creditable at Camford, and to enquire of him what other good folks there might be to whom he, Robert Birt, was still an unconscious debtor. About this "doing something creditable," Master Robert had all the peculiar confidence of a self-educated man. He saw himself working very much harder than most of his companions, who were earnestly aiming after scholarships, and he could not but feel that he had a mind peculiarly adapted for the mathematics. He had yet to learn how many a slip there is between the cup and the lip in matters collegiate, and that to confine oneself to a quarter of an hour's walk or so upon the Crumpington-road per diem, may chance not to be, in the long run, a saving of time.

Robert Birt was struck down by illness towards the conclusion of his next term at Camford, and was unable to look into a book for seven weeks. He did not, however, lie neglected in his lonely attic, by any means. Mr. Ruff Diamant seldom failed to pay him a daily visit ; Mr. Swaysive, poet as he truly was, often sent him flowers, and, when he was getting convalescent, begged his acceptance of some half-dozen of a very particular claret, most refreshing, and not potent, such as was fit for an invalid with a weak head. The thanks which Robert would fain have expressed for this, the good lecturer drowned in a eulogium upon the wine itself, a topic upon which, to say the truth, Mr. Swaysive was a no small authority. Roberts, Gaylad, and an un-euphonious friend of the name of Muggins, all reading men, were his constant visitors ; even Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks called

once, with the alluring offer of playing at cribbage with him upon the counterpane, whenever he should feel inclined for an amusement of that nature. Upon one occasion, on awakening from a feverish slumber, Robert found by his bedside a splendid bunch of grapes, with a little note lying in the plate along with them. It ran thus :—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I venture to send you the accompanying trifling present (hearing, to my sincere sorrow, that you are far from well), because I think it will have in your eyes a value which no one else would set upon it; the vine upon which these grapes were grown was always tended, while she was alive, by my mother's hands. Believe me to be your sincere well-wisher,

“ H. A. P. BROOKS HOLLIS.

“P.S.—It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the rest of us poor reading men are most uncharitably comforted by your illness, believe me.”

This note touched Robert Birt most deeply. “Where does Mr. Hollis ‘keep’?” enquired he of his bed-maker, when she next came up into his room.

“Underneath you, Sir; but he went down this morning, which, if you remember, is the last day of term; he moved into those rooms since you have been ill, but I don't wonder at your knowing nothing about it, for he has his parties somewheres else, so as not to disturb you. He most always asks after you, Sir, when he sees me, and he brought them grapes up for you this morning, hisself, when you was asleep.”

Weakened by his illness more than he was aware of, and overwhelmed by the coals of fire which his enemy had heaped upon him, Robert Birt hid his face beneath the coverlet and fairly sobbed aloud. Gradually during the ensuing vacation the poor lad grew convalescent, but was strongly recommended to take horse exercise. Now it did so happen that the young sizar had never been upon a horse's back during the whole of his natural life, and he was on that account the less disinclined to make the experiment. Moreover Muggins and Company assured him that a lark of that description would cost next to nothing, and offered to be his companions upon the first fine day, to Saffron Walden ; one ride would not ruin him, and in holiday-time the hours could be surely spared. As large a battery of reasons was brought to bear against the young man's ordinarily quiet habits, as was ever used by an embryo fast man's companions in favour of his getting drunk this once. Birt started with his three reading friends and Binks, who could not be denied by any means, on a corresponding number of horses, to Bishop's Walden. It is rather a long ride to that ancient town from Camford, but, from the circumstance of Binks insisting upon their cantering all the way thither, and upon their racing after dining there, all the way back, they were by no means long in accomplishing it. Birt, perceiving that his hack went very freely, and never needed the whip, and admiring, with Doctor Johnson, the sensation of going rapidly through the air, thought it no harm to bring back his animal to the livery yard in a state, it must be confessed, which resembled perspiration.

"Why, you've been through a river, you 'ave, with that 'ere 'oss!" remarked the groom of the stables.

"Well," returned Robert, innocently, "there *was* a little water, I believe, which we had to cross, a mile or two upon this side of Bishop's Walden."

"I tell you what it is, Sir," said the stable-keeper, who had come up during the discussion with a straw in his mouth, and his legs very wide apart, "if that horse dies after such work as you have given him, you will have to pay the piper. He is worth a matter of seventy pounds."

"Good Heavens!" cried the simple young man in great despair; "I have not got half the money; how much would you take, my good man, at once, by way of compromise?"

"Well, Sir, come to-morrow and we shall see; forty pounds down, perhaps; and then I shall be at least thirty-five pounds out of pocket."

Robert went back to St. Boniface with a heart heavy indeed, and very much set against all equestrian exercise; he had calculated, in spite of his late illness, to have got into the first class at the approaching May examination, for which, being a sizar, he would have received thirty pounds from the college, twenty pounds if he should be in the second class, ten pounds if in the third. Now, even if the best should happen, he would have to give up the whole of his prize to this cormorant, the livery-stable keeper, and ten pounds, which he could very ill spare, to boot.

It is one of the most real evils of poverty, that the merest accident may set a man at the mercy of some

blackguard attorney, or other skinflint, whom riches would have enabled the victim to despise and snap his fingers at. Many a "little account," very disputable indeed, and which, perhaps, may have been already discharged (only where hast thou mislaid the receipt, thou careless poor one?) may weigh gallingly enough upon unwealthy shoulders, which rich ones are able to dismiss with the easiest of shrugs. The contemptible but keen-eyed dealer in horse-flesh cost poor Robert a wakeful night and an unhappy morning; joy then, however, came to him in the person of Muggins, to whom he confided his grief with some little difficulty, the narration being continually interrupted by that young gentleman's laughter.

"Why, you good, green man, don't you see that it is all a plant?" cried Muggins. "That horse is worth, at most, some eighteen pounds, and has received, perhaps, two-and-sixpenny worth of damage; Master Gimlet Centaur is a sharp fellow, but if he does *me*, I promise to buy the worst of his stud at his own price. Stick on your hat, old fellow, and let us go to his den at once; I'll come with you in my cap and gown, and then he will never know me, but think that I am much such another muff as yourself."

Mr. Centaur ushered the two friends into a very dark horse-box, wherein there was an animal with his four legs swathed in bandages, and looking, certainly, very forlorn indeed.

"Are you sure," whispered Muggins to the despondent Robert, "that this is *your* horse?"



"Oh no, I am not at all sure," returned Birt; "but I think it much about the same colour."

"Off fore-leg in a hawful state!" observed Mr. Centaur.

"All four legs, do you say?" enquired Robert piteously.

Muggins covered his face in his gown and shook with laughter.

"Yes, Sir, they're all bad," returned the imperturbable dealer, "but this 'un is the worst;" he unrolled the many folds of linen about the parts affected; "here's bumps; just run your hand down these, Sir, and judge for yourself."

Robert approached the creature with some alarm, stooped down with the utmost difficulty (for he was exceedingly stiff after his late equestrian exertions), and did as he was directed.

"Well, there is a bump, I must say," confessed the wretched young man.

"It's his hock that you have got hold of!" screamed Muggins, in a paroxysm of laughter; "you'll find another bump at his knee! Take off those bandages, you old scamp, Centaur, at once, will you, and let the beast to me for a canter over to Baddingley. Look at my poor friend's hands, that are covered with your black oil and fraudulent abominations, and be ashamed."

"Really now, Mr. Muggins," stammered the livery-stable keeper, taken much aback by recognising his well-known customer, "upon my honour——"

Mr. Muggins held up his forefinger for silence, looked fixedly upon the horse-dealer, as though to prove the power of the human eye on that rapacious order of

animal, and winked expressively. "Now, look here!" cried the sagacious young man, "I'm referee; it's a handicap. If you don't agree to my proposal, you each have to give me a crown. The horse was let for twenty shillings; my friend shall give you ten shillings in addition for hire of this loose-box, the use of all this linen, and for remuneration for lesson of practical equine experience. Do you agree?"

"Make it a pound, Sir," replied the horse-dealer, grimly, "and I suppose I must."

Robert Birt drew a couple of sovereigns out of his pocket, and walked out of the stable-yard with his benefactor, a wiser and a happier man than he had entered it.





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SHERRY COBBLER.

**Q**H blithe and glorious May-term up at Camford ! where is the poet who shall describe thee fitly, even should he be dowered with “the golden pen, and heaped up flowers” upon which to lean ? The pencil of Roget has indeed portrayed thee, but underneath those pleasant pictures there is nothing of letter-press, nor, indeed, is there any needed. Here and there, graceful in verse and flawless prose, we have seen thee shining, indeed, in evanescent magazine—the fine old Grecian hand of Mr. Swaysive being therein recognisable, surely ? —but thine epic has yet to be written which must have thrilled, unsyllabled, already through many an undergraduate soul. Unhappily, we ourselves are past the epical epoch. We do remember having writ in our sweet youth a canto or two which might take rank, perhaps, above—but this is egotism.

The May at Camford is the poet’s May ; with bud and blossom, sunshine and soft airs—a very herald of the

midsummer. The limes are glorious, and the chestnuts, too; the plots of grass are green in the shadowy courts. The quaint old gardens within walls are perfect "haunts of peace;" and those by the river side are very Edens, guarded though they be by other than angels, and to be looked at from a little distance off. The river itself forgets its funereal barges as much as possible, and welcomes, with sunny smile, an innumerable fleet of fairy shallops, delicatest outriggers, wherein to sneeze is to be capsized. Swiftly do they shoot in and out beneath the bridges of carven stone, from the latticed archway of St. Jude's to that simplest one of Camford town to southward, and thence pilot their hazardous way through the more intricate channels that lead to the mill by the green. Many a water tournament is held there upon the astonished stream, many a collision happens, many an ardent chase, while "Boat ahead, Sir!" and "Where *are* you coming to?" echoes upon overladen Cam from end to end. Oh to be eighteen again, but for a single hour, and to be lying down once more in one of those arrowy boats, enjoying the pleasant weed, while Blisters pulls us, whose discarded coat shelters the claret from the kiss of the sun!

Lower down the river, miles lower, in the calm May evenings, there is a sight to be seen which savours less of dreamland; and all Camford rides, or rows, or runs with eagerness to see it. It lines the banks, it fills the slumbering barges built in the days of bluff king Harry or thereabouts, after the model of the famous *Grace à Dieu*—and throngs all neighbouring roads, with horse and

dogcart, fly and tandem. Tinged with eggflip and beer, the undergraduate wave flows through the little *Plough* and floods its lawn. Is it the struggle for the silver sculls which calls together this great concourse? If so, some twenty long-pointed pieces of frailest wood, with a half-naked man in the middle of each, looking like nothing so much as a floating pickaxe set in a human handle, will gladden their eyes. Is it the pair-oars? Is it the four-oars? No; it is those perfectest types of speed, the Camford eight-oars, whereof some score or so will race this day. Hark at that even music of the ruloes! all those eight oarsmen pulling like one, and each one pulling like eight! They slide over the scarcely ruffled bosom of the dark waters, as "slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland" in the West. What strength in that herculean stroke! what endurance in that somewhat elephantine figure in the centre! what coolness in that diminutive coxswain—(derivation, coxy, *i.e.* bumptious; by reason 'of the conceit which their unlimited privilege of swearing at bigger men too commonly engenders in these little fellows,) who is positively standing up, the better to deliver a bit of his mind to Bow who is pulling wild, instead of lying down in the bottom of that most dangerous boat (as we should do), and praying, with shut eyes, that he may get to land!

Hark at the cheering! one would almost think that the race was already begun, but that we see the flag above the reedy corner yonder, and know therefore that the sound must needs proclaim the advent of the first boat of the second St. Boniface, accompanied upon the bank

by its admiring club. You will be sure, spectator, to hear the "Well pulled, Second St. Boniface!" rise high above the din of encouraging voices presently, even although that somewhat overrated galley should have the misfortune to be bumped. This next boat with its red rowers has, it must be confessed, a very fine appearance, albeit it is that special foe of St. Boniface, the First St. Jude's, also with a great retinue of scarlet runners shouting upon the towing-path beside it. Twenty-five boats manned by two hundred and twenty-five of the most athletic young gentlemen in Christendom, have now passed by the *Plough*, and are being placed in order of starting, out of sight yonder, beyond the willows. They are set at certain distances, one behind the other, and at the third gun-fire the oarblades are dashed into the water and the struggle begins; each boat strives, as it seems, to spit with its sharpened prow the coxswain of the one in advance of it, and each coxswain is naturally interested in preventing this from occurring. If, therefore, his men should happen to be less skilful or less strong than their pursuers, he has to put in practice all his art—to do "all he knows," as the phrase is—by hugging the land, by shaving the corners, by causing his boat to writhe almost like a living thing when the danger grows most imminent, in order to escape.

Upon this occasion the leading boat happens to belong to our friends of the Second St. Boniface, and that very dangerous antagonist, the First St. Jude's, is coming a great deal closer upon it than is pleasant: we don't envy the position of the little man in blue, one bit, for he

appears almost certain to be spitted, and there being nobody before him he has of course no opportunity of impaling anybody else. The third boat belongs to the Third St. Boniface club, which has generally a brilliant but not very reliable crew. It drinks its wine, and eats its fill, and smokes its pipe even in the very race week ; while other candidates for nautical honours fast and sweat, and are in all things temperate, throughout the previous term. It is a "dark" boat, of whose merits none can judge up to the starting day, but never a contemptible one, for its members are, mainly, |Wintonians who have been nursed, as it were, upon the knees of Father Thames. Hollis, who is as agile as a panther, is pulling bow, and such members of the Corinthum as condescend to honour the *Plough* lawn with their presence at a boat race, were kind enough to murmur "Well-pulled, 'pon honour," as he went past them before the start. They might say that *now* indeed, and give him a cheer as well, if they had it in them, as these three first boats come racing by.

No. 1 taking the river diagonally, and by that device avoiding the immediate bump as No. 2 overlaps them, but by no means getting over the water the faster for it ; No. 2 exclusively bent upon bumping, and not giving much heed to No. 3, who has no occasion for diagonal courses at all, inasmuch as it is putting its "spurt" on. The Third St. Boniface "spurt" does not last for forty yards perhaps, but while it *does* last      Look, only look at that ! Second St. Boniface has again escaped by the skin of its teeth from the First St. Jude's, who has

missed her aim and lost much ground (or water) in doing so. "Pull," screams the little red man, "pull, you beggars, or we shall be bumped ourselves." They *are* bumped; "whish," hisses the eager prow of the Wintonian as it glides over the enemy's stem, and the air is rent by a tremendous cheer of—"Well pulled, Third St. Boniface," do you suppose? Oh no; of "Well pulled, *Second* St. Boniface!" whose *alumni* firmly believe that it merits to be head of the river, under any circumstances. Other boats have their successes likewise and are cheered lustily, as they sweep with their gorgeous flags flying, in sign of victory, up the teeming river to their particular homes; ranges of wooden erections, built with "one foot on *wave*, one foot on shore," like the inconstant heroes of the old song.

No one congratulated Hollis more warmly upon this somewhat unexpected success of his club than did Robert Birt; the two young men, so different, were now become close friends. University life had rubbed off many of the nodosities which belonged to, or had been induced by circumstances upon Robert's character, and made him, where his not inexcusable prejudices were not too powerful, an agreeable as well as a most intelligent companion. It had, on the other hand, brought the many pleasant features of that of the young fellow-commoner into extreme prominence—a college career being as it were the hot-bed or forcing-house of blooming Fancy, and the very archery ground of the youthful bowman Wit. He did not, it is true, much sympathise with Robert's ardent desire for the education of the poor; with his



reading classes of working men (then just established at Camford), to which he found time to give much attention in spite of the examination that was drawing so nigh ; with his schemes for the improvement of the dwelling houses of labouring folk : and with the many other practical benevolences about which the more thoughtful of the two was always busying himself : but Hollis felt that there must be something better in such exertions than his own supineness in these respects permitted him to confess.

The universities are very bad training schools indeed for the reception of this sort of earnestness, as well as for the formation of political opinion. The young gentlemen—particularly if they be rich and well-born—are surrounded by a set of, if not servile, at least very pliant personages, who give them neither true nor good ideas of the stuff of which the people are composed. They rarely behold the spectacle of a poor man who is at the same time honest and independent, except in the person of some rabid Radical of the “town,” who treats the “gown,” in print and on platform, in a manner which, to say the best of it, is far from conciliating. They are taught to believe, by the bad example of the institutions of their own college in respect of the worship of wealth and title, as well as by the adulation and covetousness of their inferiors, that money and high birth are everywhere paramount, and that the democracy are “snobs,” and something worse. An undergraduate of St. Boniface once saved the life of a little child, who had fallen into the stream by the Crumpington-road, by leaping in after it,

with his clothes on, in December. The child's mother—for he took the little thing home—overwhelmed him with thanksgiving, and on the morrow the father called, in order, as the young man (who had caught a severe cold) anticipated, to reiterate them. "Pray don't say any more, my good fellow," observed the modest youth; "I am very pleased to have done you this service; I am glad to hear the poor child is none the worse; good-morning to you." The visitor lingered at the door, and presently, pulling his fore-lock, requested the gentleman "*just to give him a shilling or so, to drink his health with.*"

The Camford folks have each young gentleman but for three years certain, and the object of many of them therefore is to get as much out of him during that period as is possible,—although of course there are several admirable exceptions. Thence in a great measure it happens, that while, among the orators of the Union society, Liberalism is well represented enough, the great majority of the audience is always Conservative, and even Tory, to the backbone. If it be true indeed that the university authorities are in political opinion behind the age, it is equally certain that the mass of undergraduates are behind the university authorities. Some of the exceptional cases are, as might be expected, extreme on the other hand in their democratic opinions. "Was Orsini justified in risking the lives of the surrounding company in his late attempt upon the life of Louis Napoleon?" was, it is likely enough, the subject of debate the week afterwards; the proposer having had not the least doubt, in his own mind, as to the propriety of putting an im-

mediate and violent end to the existence of "the present perjured and infamous tyrant (*sic*, in the Unionic notice) who defiles the throne of France." The Corinthum is generally represented by at least one speaker in "the Union," who attends the debates in evening dress, with his spangled gown thrown elegantly over one shoulder, and stands, when speaking, with one foot (in polished leather,) advanced.

"I shall waive my hereditawy wank," lisped no less a person than Lord Yornoway, upon the occasion of an attack being made upon the aristocracy by Handgrenade of Corpus, "and forget in this discussion that I am the offspwing of a hundwed earls."

"Which is a very bad compliment to his mother," whispered Legion to Hollis, who but for that comical notion was about to have applauded his noble friend.

It is of course very easy to turn into ridicule an assembly of youths, whose ideas must be necessarily crude and whose dignity somewhat precocious, and this has often enough been done ; but the Union society of Camford is nevertheless by far the most impressive, as it is beyond all contradiction the most useful of all undergraduate institutions. Here the young divine is taught how to modulate to pulpit pitch, tones which are naturally perhaps by no means musical ; or the future leader of his circuit first ventures upon tongue-fence, and splits hairs for practice without fee ; or the embryo lord chancellor, it may be, receives his example from the august possessor of the Unionic chair. Here the hereditary statesman perorates amidst the hushed admiration of

hundreds; and here the buoyant wit replies extemporaneously,—the principle ingredients of his oration lying, nevertheless, securely folded up in his waistcoat pocket, and conned not seldom during the week.

Lord Yornoway's magnificent defence of his order was in fact, upon the occasion to which we have referred, torn to shreds and made ridiculous enough by Mr. Legion, who followed upon the other side with the most malicious keenness. He had taken a somewhat unfair advantage of his lordship in having run his eye over several pages of rather stilted prose, which he had found in the writing-room a few days before, and which Lord Yornoway had returned in a cold perspiration to look after; being, as it was, his own forthcoming oration, which he prefaced, we are sorry to say, when he came to deliver it, with, "Sir, I came down to this house to-night, with no intention of addressing it." Everything is carried on precisely as it is at St. Stephen's: and we must confess that we have sometimes heard in the younger institution, such an untutored but lively eloquence, and such fresh, although perhaps enthusiastic ideas, as we have listened in vain for among the rounded periods and stereotyped common-places of the House of Commons in ordinary. The youthful, but often not undignified looking speaker in the chair: the business-like appearance of the treasurer and secretary beneath him; the benches upon either side crowded with the gowned audience, who, contrary to the uncourteous custom of "another place," remove their caps during a debate; and the Ciceronic attitude, and even attire, of the orator for the time being, make up

rather a pleasant miniature copy of a by no means un-sublime picture than that parody upon an epic which it has been often represented to be.

Legion was, *par excellence*, the democratic orator of the Union in the times of which we speak, and was for ever throwing firebrands of scorn against what he somewhat vulgarly denominated "swelldom," in the form of mock defence. His ground for resisting a motion in favour of educational suffrage was, that any intellectual ordeal must needs at once exclude from political power that beloved aristocracy who has done so much for all of us; "Where," he went on presently to enquire, "where, I should like to know, if you abolish *that*, are we to get those lofty names which are at present so indispensable to our cheap clothiers?"

Robert Birt, although he entirely sympathised with these remarks of his "honourable friend," was by no means inclined to "cotton" to the brilliant Legion. He looked upon that young gentleman as upon one who, knowing what is right, wilfully chooses what is wrong; and indeed it must be confessed, that the sprightly orator was as little disinclined to take his ease, and let the world wag as it would, as any member of the Corinthum itself. Just now Robert had but little time to spare for listening to Unionic eloquence. The May examinations had commenced: the tables in the hall of St. Boniface were laid out every morning and afternoon with wholesale stationery, instead of the joints and the melted butter which garnished them on other occasions. "Paper, paper, everywhere," as the parody runs, "paper, and pens, and ink."

"I say, Birt," said the unhappy Binks, on the first day of this ordeal, and in the same stage whisper in which he had addressed him at the entrance examination, "give us a look at your papers, there's a good chap."

"Certainly not," replied the other, decisively; "we are now competing, remember, for places in the class list."

"*I aint*, I know *that*," replied the victim, mournfully. "Oh, lawks, do let us have one look, I will only copy one out of five, that will save me from the last class, any how; do, do, pray."

"My dear Sir, I will *not*," responded Birt, firmly; "and if I would, I dare *not*."

"Then you're a ——!" Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks confided to the top button of his own waistcoat a long stream of uncomplimentary epithets, among which the constant recurrence of such words as "low sneak" and "ungentlemanly beggar," proved how possible it is for two (or more) persons to take the most diametrically opposite views of what is high and honourable. The end of all this was that Mr. Binks found himself in very good company (with all the lords, indeed, and half the hat fellow-commoners), at the very bottom of the list, under the uncourteous heading of "Not worthy to be classed," and Robert Birt made to himself a deadly enemy. His own name figured in the first class, as did also—and it was very creditable to the popular young swell—that of the Hon. Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis. That gentleman gave a tremendous dinner to commemorate the event, at which not one of the numerous sets to

which he belonged was unrepresented. This *r union*, in spite of the college plate, and the gorgeous viands served upon it, was by no means a success: it was like one of those literary debauches in which Mr. Hollis himself used to boast of indulging—a morning’s study, consisting of a quarter of an hour’s skimming of the cream of a dozen quite different volumes, with a result that may be easily imagined.

“What a number of queer fellows you seem to know,” remarked Lord Courtwell, by no means in a whisper, as he sat down at the festive board; and indeed the observation was a great deal more correct than polite.

“’Tis a pity Hollis spoils his parties with so many empty champagne bottles,” muttered Handgrenade to another of the same opinion as himself, that the post of every honest Englishman was upon the barricades.

“Where’s Flywheel? does anybody know?” asked the host, pointing to a vacant chair; “I am afraid we shall not see him to-night.”

“I’m devilish glad of it,” said Legion; “I breakfasted with him this morning.”

“Grateful creature,” observed Hollis; “and is that why you don’t want to see him again?”

“No, not quite that,” returned the other, laughing, “although I confess I do like to see new faces” (looking at Courtwell, who was a standing dish at all Hollis’s feasts), “but he would be certain to have made some of his experiments here, and either have blown us up with gunpowder or poisoned us with noxious gases. He has lately invented an infernal machine that he euphoni-

ously terms a coffee-pot, but which nearly slew the whole of us this very day !”

“ I wish it had ! ” whispered Mydleton to his lordship, fervently ; “ there would then have been at least two Radicals less in the world.”

“ Muggins and Mr. Straitlace yonder were there also,” continued Legion, “ but I don’t wonder at their pretending not to hear me ; when I knocked at the great practical mathematician’s door this morning, a little after time, I was told to come in in the muffled sort of tone which a person would use when speaking through bedclothes, so that I expected to find him still unrisen ; when I entered, there was nothing in the sitting-room, indeed, but a thin smoke, although the breakfast things looked as if somebody had been at them too : then I heard Muggins’s voice from under the table, and, I think, Mr. Straitlace’s also, asking if they might venture out, and if all was safe.

“ ‘ Where is the danger ? ’ asked I.

“ ‘ Oh, we don’t know ! ’ cried Mr. Straitlace, ‘ only the coffee-pot has just gone off with a most tremendous bang, and Flywheel says it’s very likely that it will do it ag——’

“ The words were hardly out of his mouth before an explosion took place which fairly shook the house, and knocked me down with the wind of it.”

“ With the fright of it,” said Muggins, in a loud whisper.

“ ‘ Aye, it’s all right now,’ observed Flywheel, coolly, coming out of the bed-room, where he had been hiding his head in the blankets ; ‘ I thought there must be two distinct explosions, if it happened at all. What a mercy



for you fellows it was, that it did not take a downward direction ; the iron plate would have gone through that thin table like a pane of glass.'

" ' Confound you ! ' cried Straitlace.

" I beg your pardon," interrupted the young man referred to, who was a disciple of Swete Smyler's; " I think I said ' Bless me ! ' "

" ' Cuss me ! ' now you mention it, was, I think, the exact phrase you used," pursued Legion ; " but I have, at all events, the most vivid recollection of the expression of your countenance, wherein, as the poet says, ' rage conquered fear.' I don't wonder that Flywheel does not venture to come to-night."

But the conversation, in spite of Mr. Legion's liveliness, began to flag; and that gentleman, conceiving himself not to be appreciated as he deserved (and, like most of the wits, he was a little *exigant* in that matter), presently " shut up " altogether, and declined to be amusing any longer. Even Mr. Straitlace easily found a hearing, and, selecting the most worldly subject with which he was acquainted, as being least unsuitable to his present company, began to re-deliver the lecture which he had heard that morning from the sub-warden in the geological schools, upon avalanches. Mr. Straitlace had described the direful effect of one of these mountain terrors in a manner very much the reverse of that adopted by Mr. Albert Smith in *his* recitals, and finished his description, in the midst of a most solemn silence, with this interrogative reflection :—" If one were travelling upon a mountain-road between two precipices, and perceived one of these

terrible scourges overhanging us, and about to fall almost immediately, without a hope of succour, or of safety, what would one do, I wonder ? ”

“ What would one *do* ? ” repeated contemptuously No. Four of the 2nd St. Boniface, who had taken, by this time, quite as much champagne and sherry as was good for him ; “ what would one do, Sir, under those ridiculous circumstances ? Why, weak-minded people would pray, Sir, and strong-minded people would swear, Sir, would swear.”

Mr. Straitlace’s immediate withdrawal, after receiving this solution of his difficulty, caused a rather sudden break-up of the whole company. No. Four had to be supported to his room, which was luckily upon the next staircase, and to be undressed and put to bed by Nos. Two and Six, the latter of whom—the training for the races being over—was in a slightly vinous condition also ; he dropped his cigar upon his friend’s naked flesh while engaged upon his Samaritan-like labours ; and, upon No. Two remonstrating, replied, “ Never mind, old fellow, it will keep alight till I pick it up again,” as if the extinction of the havanna had been the sole cause of his friend’s anxiety. Muggins and Roberts were in the metaphysical stage, and had retired together wrangling desperately upon the nature of the “ over soul.” Mydleton, who “ kept ” out of college, passed the night at the doors of Queen Eleanor’s Tower (which had not been opened for years), under the impression that they were the great gates, and believing that the porters must certainly hear him knocking presently.

There is undoubtedly a seductiveness about sherry-

cobbler, in hot weather, greater than belongs to any other drink whatever. The straw imparts to it an air of childishness inconsistent with the idea of danger : you keep sucking "just a thimblefull more," without that consciousness of giving way to temptation which attends the taking "just another glass" of the ordinary liquors. Even when you have determined to confine yourself to blowing holes through the crystal prisms in your tumbler, you find yourself putting, inadvertently, a few more drops of sherry in, "because it tastes so cold ;" then you want more sugar and more lemon-peel, of course, and you put a little too much of one, or both of them ; and then you want a little more wine to correct that. When you lift up your head after your first tumbler,—as you persist in calling that which is, in reality, perhaps, your sixteenth, and which contains no more of the original ingredient than Simeonism does of Simeon,—you fancy, perhaps, that somebody is calling you intoxicated : to convince your imaginary slanderer of this mistake of his, you indignantly take an entire rick of straws, and, arranging them after the manner of the Pandean pipes, proceed to "go in for cobbler" in good earnest. It is unnecessary, and would be painful to us, to point out what, under those circumstances, must needs happen to you, sooner or later.

Hollis, Lord Courtwell, and Robert Birt were presently left alone at the long table covered with melted ices, scraps of pine-apple, bits of havanna cigars, and fragments of broken glass,—the hideous remnants of what had been once a magnificent dessert. They had all been

at the cobblers, but Lord Courtwell had been at the shoemakers and bootmakers also ; port, sherry, claret, and even ( " just for fun " ) a dash of brandy-cobbler, had conveyed through the little straw-chimneys their combined fumes into that particular portion of his lordship's head where the brain should have been, with the most unfortunate results. The worst parts of his lordship's nature had become preternaturally exaggerated ; his pride was forced into full-blown insolence ; his reserve into downright ill-temper.

Robert Birt had remained so long at table, at first, for the sake of having a good chat with Hollis, who was going down for the long vacation on the ensuing day ; but he was now entirely bent upon sitting out Lord Courtwell, though he should sit till chapel-time the next morning, and had almost forgotten the original purpose for which he stayed. Robert, although he had sucked but little compared to what had been imbibed by the other two, was not so much used to cobbler as they, and the peculiar features of his character which the liquor had developed in him, were those of democracy and obstinacy. The two guests, whom their host sat staring at with a preternatural solemnity, were certainly far from being harmoniously inclined. Lord Courtwell, still pumping at his iced Artesian well, although he had long lost all recognition of what particular liquid it at that time contained, began to entertain the feeling of diabolical hate against a particular member of the company, which is one of the peculiar but not unusual phases (as we have read) of extreme intoxication. He remembered to have heard

it said by some one—Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks to wit, only he did not recollect *that*—that Robert Birt was a sizar of the college, and a person of low birth ; and this meagre information, rendered doubly dim by his lordship's mental haziness, was yet sufficient to give him the cue for an insolent speech.

“Here’s bad luck to all snobs !” cried he, by way of toast, elevating his straw instead of a glass, and inhaling the atmosphere of the room (which was decidedly noxious) under the impression that it was more wine. His fishy eyes unmistakably dwelt upon Robert, and that youth retorted promptly, “And so say I ; what put snobs into your head, my lord ? Was it anything you saw in that looking-glass ? ”

“I was thinking of *you*,” pursued Lord Courtwell, with the greatest slowness and deliberation, and understanding but very little of what had been said to him.

The host here rose in a most dignified manner to return thanks, in a somewhat disjointed speech, for the honour which his friend on the right hand had done him in proposing, and his friend on the left in seconding, his health, in those eulogistic terms.

“Why, do you call him your friend ?” drawled Lord Courtwell. “How can he be one’s snob ? That is—I mean—how can a snob like him be one’s friend ? ”

“What are you maundering about ? you don’t talk straight,” muttered Hollis, irritably, somewhat sobered by the strange expression of Robert’s countenance ; “Courtwell’s drunk, you must remember, Birt ; and besides *that*, he is a fool. I won’t have quarrelling here.”

"Birt, Birt, Birt, Birt," muttered his lordship thickly, like a piece of clockwork very much out of repair ; " that's the name of the fellow who was spooney upon the Jones ; do you remember the Jones at our farm, Hollis ? "

" Silence ! " thundered Birt ; " silence, you drunken swine, or I will brain you with this decanter ! "

" It is a thing impossible, Robert, that braining," cried Hollis, with a forced laugh, all his wits returning to him at once, and in extreme alarm at what might follow. " Pray take no notice ; come, Courtwell, it is time to be off ; you'll be a pretty object to-morrow. "

" She *was* pretty," murmured his lordship with an air of conviction ; " she was certainly pretty for a ' workus ; ' I wonder what's become of the poor devil ! " (He was getting quite fluent upon this not unfamiliar subject.) " Gone, I suppose, to make a little worse that which Swete Smyler designates ' our greatest social evil ; ' though I can't say, for my own part, that I can see the particular ev——"

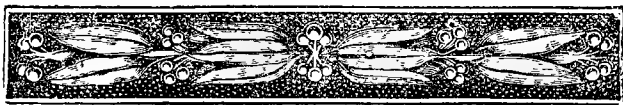
Before his lordship could fully enunciate an opinion that might perhaps have thrown quite a new light upon this much-debated subject, the foot of a decanter, hurled by Robert Birt, struck him with considerable force upon the neck, and hurled him backwards. Luckily for him, his antagonist was not in a state to ensure correctness of aim, or it is probable that the Constitution would have lost a bulwark, and the great Courtwell peerage have become extinct at that identical moment ; as it was, however, it only became dormant, or out of its senses, and in that state his lordship was conveyed to his own apartments

upon an animated inclined plane, constructed of a college porter at the one end of him, and of his own little tiger at the other.

Most profuse, and, indeed, most genuine, were the apologies which Hollis poured upon his insulted friend ; but the iron of Lord Courtwell's clumsy insolence had entered into the soul of Robert Birt.

"Never, so help me Heaven," cried he, "never more will I take the hand of one of your accursed class, never sit at your tables, never put it into the power of one of you to place his foot upon my neck again. I had begun to think better—far too well, indeed—of you all ; this is a lesson, however, that I shall never forget. You are not to blame, I know that ; I like you, Hollis ; but we must not meet again in this manner ; not here at least ; good-bye, my friend. No, Hollis—not my hand."





## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE LONG.

**T**HE Long! What a pleasant charm still lingers about that little word! To our old ears how sad and sweet it sounds! We do not mean the long vacation of the lawyers and professional people, the six weeks' holiday of the smoke-dried, parch-menty persons,—grateful as no doubt that scanty relaxation of theirs must be,—but the Long, *par excellence*, the four months' vacation of the universities, spent with that pleasantest of sedate fictions—a reading party. Blithest of blithe epochs! the holy (happy enough to be holy), holy days of youth! Our summer-time, indeed! Little does it matter in what spot of earth this be spent; for the undergraduate being young, and having health and friends, carries the elements of happiness along with him, just as we reverend signors carry our negative delights with us, of dinner-pills and cough mixtures, and *Revelenta Arabica*, warranted to be equally good in every clime.



These lucky strollers take their own scenery with them, and are independent of locality for the playing out of their charming vaudeville. Whether we place them in some pleasant old Rhine village, by the banks of the arrowy stream, and within the shadow of the ruins of some robber hold; where the "well-pulled, 2nd St. Boniface," will fall upon the ear of the British tourist upon steamboat, as surely as it would have reached him a month ago had he been voyaging upon Cam; where German *burschen* themselves will not outdo them in "polishing off" yard glasses of what is there by courtesy termed beer, or in smoking ell-pipes of what is by a similar stretch of politeness called tobacco. Or by forest and torrent in the grim Norland, where even German beer is not to be got, and even German tobacco becomes of pecuniary value, and even German maidens' faces appear quite good-looking by contrast with those of the female descendants of the Vikings. Or in the snowy bosom of the Helvetic mother of freedom, where they will attempt impossible "passes," and dispense with the "experienced and necessary guides" upon all occasions; where they will fall desperately in love at *table d'hôtes* (not with the dinners—most certainly, but) with the Russian princess sitting opposite to them, who speaks such beautiful broken English, and whose foot now and then touches theirs by merest accident underneath the narrow board. Or last, and best of all, in some fair spot of our own most beautiful England; or in that sister-island which is so near to us, that none of its inhabitants can be said to be out of Erin; or in the land of those cakes which, to our simple fancy, stand

in exceeding need of sugar and plums. The Reading-party maintains its individuality wheresoever it goes.

It had been arranged by Robert Birt and his friends, over the map of England, that they should pass their Long in the fair lake-country, after which resolution they appointed unto themselves a coach, or (as a tutor of that description is not seldom called), "a mathematical grinder." By this arrangement they prevented those schisms which will sometimes arise through previously engaging a coach who is desirous of going in one direction, while his team of pupils inclines to another. Mr. Cardan Bracket was well acquainted with their proposed place of sojourn, and delighted in it. Circumstances had made him a mathematician, whom Nature had originally intended for a poet. He was a lover of the woods and streams, an eager quaffer of the mountain breezes, an active climber of the crag and fell, but delicate in his tastes withal, and given, perhaps overmuch, to the recitation of fragments from his favourite bards. The unsentimental Gaylad, who was one of the party, was fated to aggravate him not a little, at various times during their summer-life, by rather earthy remarks and unsentimental rejoinders. He was wont to speak of their long mountain rambles by tarn and precipice as "doing the mountains;" and was ever curious to see in how few hours they could effect great distances, as though they were engaged in a time-race, rather than a search for the picturesque. Upon one occasion, on a moonlight walk from Keswick to Ambleside, when Mr. Bracket pulled up short at the Wishing Gate at Grasmere, en-

tranced with the appearance of the sleeping valley, and thus expressed himself: "Have you ever seen the lake under a more charming aspect than it presents to-night?"

Gaylad rejoined, "Did I ever? oh, no, never (singing.) I wonder whether I could chuck a stone in it from where we stand?"

"Hang it!" used this unfortunate young man to reply to the remonstrances of his tutor, "I can't get spooney over the scenery as you can, Bracket; I'm not one of your blessed turtle doves, I'm not." This latter statement was not entirely so correct, however, as it appeared to be,—as was discovered before the end of the vacation. Ere that time arrived, Mr. Cardan Bracket found himself set *in loco parentis* indeed; for the Manchester guardian of a charming young lady, who had adorned, with others, not a few of the young gentlemen's pic-nic parties, came down upon the unsuspecting coach, to demand whether Mr. Gaylad's prospects in life were of a satisfactory character, insomuch as he had made an offer of marriage to his (the old gentleman's) ward; this offer had also been even couched in verse, for which the fair lady's name of Laura had presented a rythmical advantage too powerful to be resisted by her young adorer. It had been likewise somewhat imprudently conveyed by means of a little paper balloon, which adverse winds had conducted to the hands of quite the wrong party, in the person of a female dragon, who immediately telegraphed southward, and the *Deus ex machinâ*, the millionaire out of the railway train, at once arrived, and cut the little true-lover's-knot to ribbons.

In vain the kind-hearted Mr. Bracket interceded for his unfortunate pupil, by the recital of the aptest quotations from "Locksley Hall" and other poetical works which advocate frugal marriages; in vain he offered to demonstrate, by the purest mathematics, that a hundred pounds per annum was enough for any man to marry upon, and yet to enable him to put by a handsome sum at the end of the year. The Manchester guardian was inexorable. The female dragon spread her wings and bore away her unhappy charge from love and Lakeland, with many an indignant sniff. The unsentimental Gaylad paled and loathed his food for eight-and-twenty hours, but upon the second morning—there being trout for breakfast—dispelled the anxiety which his friends were beginning to feel for him, at once and for ever. On one occasion only, was he supposed to have again reverted to the beloved object, even in the recesses of his own mind, when he was heard to whistle softly to himself the melody entitled "Oh, Susannah! don't you cry for me," with peculiar meaning and pathos.

To Robert Birt—although his recent *fracas* with Lord Courtwell had again drawn down the curtain which was but beginning to rise, and gloomed his spirit afresh—this life among the hills was bliss indeed. To him who had been accustomed only to the gentle undulations of Rookshire, and to "the level wastes, the rounded gray" of the fen country, the mountains and the lakes were a new world. He experienced those feelings afresh which occurred to him upon his escape from Senbury, when the good carrier had pointed out the ocean to his inland eyes.

The honest and independent dalesmen who inhabited the secluded valley where the reading party had pitched their tent, were just to his taste, and seemed to him inexpressibly superior to the Southerners of equal grade. They drank a little, it is true, maintaining when in their cups a certain ludicrously solemn carriage very much like that of the members of the Camford Corinthum when sober; but they were all day long in the wind and wet, and their pursuits within doors were not so studious as they might otherwise have been, in consequence of their general inability—we are speaking of years ago—to read. They had a natural shrewdness, however, compensating for much book-learning, and in particular a rude faculty of judging persons by other than a mere money standard, which education could never have given to them, but might even have very possibly polished away. They certainly never lost, “in form and gloss, the picturesque of man and man,” nor indeed of woman and woman either. One of the richest statesmen (yeoman) in Merdale—at whose wedding Mr. Cardan Bracket proposed “the ladies,” in a speech more than one half of which was the most elegant poetry, and from whose hospitable door the tutor and his pupils did not depart till daybreak—chose for the *locale* of his honeymoon a certain genteel watering place, and put up at the best hotel. At that house it was the custom for the inmates to sit at *table d’hôte* in the order of their seniority, the person who had been residing there for the longest period being appointed president, with the latest arrival facing him as vice. Mr. Gritsome, the Merdale statesman, oc-

cupied this latter post, with his bride beside him, upon the second day.

"Mr. Vice," said the president, nodding to his *vis-à-vis*, after the first course, "a glass of wine with you?"

Mr. Thomas Gritsome pursued his researches into a beef-steak pudding, without moving a muscle in reply.

"Mr. Vice, a glass of wine," reiterated the president loudly : but the statesman was not a man to be diverted from his purposes by mere clamour. "He must be deaf and dumb," quoth the head of the feast in a rage ; "is there anybody here who can talk to him with their fingers?"

"Mr. Vice," observed one of those who sat at the same end of the table, "don't you hear the president asking you to take wine with him?"

The newly-married man glanced towards his wife, as if already in need of her advice as to how to proceed ; whereupon that lady arose and, looking the president and the general company in the face, responded curtly, "He's nae mair vice than thee art ; his name's Tommy Gritsome ; he lives at Merdale Farm ; he's got three hundred pounds a year, and he don't care *that* (snapping her fingers) for none of yel."

So very new to Mr. and Mrs. Gritsome were terms most ordinarily used in civilised life. More hospitable, kind-hearted people than that pair were not to be found in Cumberland. Their comfortable ancestral farmhouse—they were cousins, and had lived under the same roof for years before their marriage—with its roomy warmth,

its substantial plenty, and its lack of all mere delicate superfluities, was a type of themselves. The quaintly-carved and well-polished old oak chests reflected not only every object in their neighbourhood, but the housewifely care of her who had plenished them with layers of oat-cake, sufficient to supply a garrison, and all made by her own plump hands. To listen to the experiences of her father, or of his (the old folks in the North are in the habit of seeing their great-grandchildren, and are comparatively young people when their sons and daughters marry), was to hear how men of the South lived during the times of James II., or the Protectorate,—with so slow a step had luxury advanced towards Merdale. In their great kitchen, which was their parlour also, and the place where all the household dined together at one table, were suspended some score of wrestling-belts, which this or that generation of Gritsomes had acquired. Of these the unsentimental Gaylad was exceedingly enamoured; and indeed, there were few north-country feasts within walking distance—that is to say, within fifteen miles each way—whereat the whole of the reading party did not make their appearance, in order to witness “the sports;” and not always to witness only.

The sturdy Muggins was a very Orlando in the wrestling ring, and often by living over the three or four first rounds, managed to secure some five or ten shillings, which he had, however, of course subscribed beforehand. It was a grand sight to behold that youth and those opposed to him when stripped for the encounter. Such thews, such sinews! He was not one

whit behind the magnificent athletes of the North in this respect—for many “a swipe for five,” on Darker’s Piece, and Penner’s Cricket-ground, had developed his muscular gifts amazingly—but he was but small. It was wonderful to see the great grim men come up to him and, stooping, cast a huge long arm beneath his shoulder, as though they would bear him away, infant-like, to the most convenient place for laying him down; and then to watch the trouble that he gave them to accomplish this, refusing, when lifted up, to come down upon anything else but his feet, and not seldom actually capsizing his giant foes, and receiving the victor’s ticket. Then would “Bonny leil one!” (well done, little fellow!) cleave the air from a thousand throats, and strong liquids be offered to him gratuitously upon all sides; and the Rev. Cardan Bracket (in a mixed cravat, and by no means the high-collared waistcoat which he was wont to wear at Camford) would pat him on the back, applaudive, and Robert Birt be incited by his friend’s success to try, perhaps, his own luck likewise—with, however, quite other results; for Robert, though firmly built, was not athletic. Gaylad would have been among the light weight wrestlers also, but that he was generally keeping himself fresh for the leaping-bar and the foot-race.

He had been giving in his name upon one occasion, at a great meeting at Ulverston, as a competitor in these latter amusements, when chancing to run his eyes over the list, they came upon something which caused them to open considerably wider.

“I say, Bracket,” cried he, running back to his friends,



"Birt, Muggins, all of you, who *do* you think has entered for these sports? A Camford man; now guess."

"Lord Yornoway," suggested Robert, laughing.

"Incense Flexion," cried Muggins, with a look towards his esteemed coach in the shooting-jacket, who (when at Camford) was supposed to adhere to that mediæval chieftain.

"Swete Smyler," muttered Mr. Bracket, savagely; "I shall not be the least surprised if it's Swete Smyler."

"Far worse, or rather far better than any of them," yelled the delighted Gaylad, "it's the warden of St. Boniface himself!"

Mr. Cardan Bracket indulged in a prolonged and expressive whistle.

"Yes, that's him," resumed Gaylad, regardless of grammar; "and I am more pleased than astonished; why, he has tried his hand—both hands—at everything, and succeeded, too; is it not now, therefore, high time that he should begin trying his feet? We shall have a book from him upon modern public games next term, contrasting the Roman amphitheatre with the Ulverston ring, with some notes in the appendix upon the resistance of the air to a flying body, at the distances from the earth of four feet five, four feet six, and four feet seven inches respectively. I'll lay a sovereign that he don't go over four feet seven without a pole."

Muggins had been sitting upon the ground with his feet in the air, from sheer delight at the picture conjured up in his mind's eye by this intelligence, but he suddenly rose up with a sobered face, and observed gravely, "I

say, Gaylad, my boy, you mustn't beat him ; he don't like being beaten, you know, and he aint used to it ; you have not got your scholarship yet, mind."

This new consideration set the whole company laughing.

"Let him do it," cried Birt ; "let Gaylad beat the warden, Muggins, it will be all the better for us."

At this moment the bell was rung, the ring cleared for the erection of the leaping-bar, and the names of the candidates began to be called over. The reading party waited anxiously enough to see who would answer to that which had merited and earned distinction in almost every field, save in that in which it was now to appear (perhaps) for the first time. But before it was proclaimed the trick was discovered, insomuch as Muggins caught a glimpse, amidst the crowd, of the countenance of their acquaintance, Legion, teeming with fun, and evidently rejoicing over his pleasant piece of forgery.

"Upon my word," cried he, when remonstrated with by Mr. Bracket upon this very unjustifiable proceeding, "I got so deeply involved in the warden's philosophy during the May examination, and I am now so plunged in Paley for the ensuing 'little-go,' that I have lost all moral sense of my own entirely, and am quite impervious to shame."

It was doubtless very vulgar of these young gentlemen to strip themselves next kin to naked, and to leap and run in competition with common north country lads, but it would be hard to point out wherein lay the positive harm of it. Contrasted with the athletic amusement which the Hon.

Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis was at that same period indulging in,—the playing at pool for half sovereign lives at the Rhododendrum Club in London,—it certainly gained in health what it lost in fashion. The two young wrestlers returned from the grassy ring at Ulverston better qualified, it is probable, to grapple on the morrow, the one with his bewildering Paley, the other with his high mathematics, than did the fellow-commoner from his board of green cloth in St. James's-street. Legion, who was reading, as he expressed it, "upon his own hook," was asked to join the lake party for the remainder of the vacation, and arrived at Merdale on the ensuing evening with his books. Mr. Bracket had laid much stress upon his bringing these with him, which, however, with the exception of a very condensed edition of "The Evidences," did not consist of any more abstruse volumes than a few numbers of Mr. Hunt's "Indicator," Mr. Keats' Poems, and a (then) new treatise upon Short Whist, by Major A—. It must be confessed Legion was far from being an assistance to the Grinder in encouraging his young friends, by example or precept, to increased diligence in their studies. Moreover, he was wont to parody or otherwise ridicule that gentleman's most favourite passages from the poets, not excepting even the philosophic Wordsworth.

"I never see mutton at dinner," remarked Mr. Bracket on one occasion, as he was helping himself to a third plateful of that meat, "without thinking of those expressive words of the bard of Rydal Mount, with reference to sheep in their pastures, 'There are forty feeding like one.'"

"And I never see *you* at dinner," quoth the disrespectful Legion, "without thinking of the reverse of that immortal line, 'There is one feeding like forty.'"

"I seem to remember," retorted the irritated and retentive tutor, "a little sarcasm of that kind having been perpetrated once before."

Even this most palpable hit, could not, however, keep the elastic young gentleman down; and when Gaylad afterwards in confidence remarked,

"That coach of ours will certainly one day eat till he pops;" the unfeeling Legion replied, "Then it only remains (so that we may hear the very last of him) that he be taken into some mountainous spot where there is an echo."

And, indeed, that the hill breezes did have a most appetising effect upon Mr. Cardan Bracket was quite true. Healthier, wiser, better, in short, did the whole party return from glorious Cumberland to the sacred shades of Camford after "the Long,"—brimful of nature, and braced for the intellectual contest which was awaiting most of them, for it was the term appointed for the scholarship examination at St. Boniface. The little-go occurred likewise at about the same period; and although there was nothing in that mild ordeal to terrify even so dull a man as Swyper, or so idle a one as Legion, it annoyed by its petty exactions those who were then engaged about higher things. Robert Birt and Gaylad were not a little harassed by it, and that circumstance certainly gave a slight "pull" to their rival Muggins and one other, who were exempted from little-go.

The cause of Muggins's enjoyment of this special privilege was ludicrous enough. Every year there come up to Camford, and generally to St. Boniface, one or two young gentlemen who claim the immunities of royal descent; the difficulty of course lies, not in the claiming of it—for most monarchs of this country have been fathers of their people in more senses than one—but in the claiming of it legitimately, and, above all, in the proving of it. Somewhere about bluff King Harry's time, however, there was (if we mistake not) a certain Lady Eleanor Plantagenet, who married nearly as many husbands as her august relative wives, and increased and multiplied the Tudor family most wonderfully. It was through this often-bereaved lady that the uneuphonious Muggins, by help of five-and-thirty pounds or so, and Garter King-at-arms, contrived to avoid the little-go examination at Camford. All lords, all honourables (including, of course, Mr. Hollis, whose position, by-the-bye, as a fellow-commoner prevented his going in for a scholarship), all baronets, even, were likewise exempted from this ordeal. Their M.A. degrees are likewise conferred upon them in their second year instead of their seventh. All silver spoons of this kind at Camford (and Oxbridge), get the university crest put on them, in fact, in less than a third of the time required for that true Britannia metal, the lower classes.

With the modern satirists, as we remember—*in re* the Vice-Chancellor of the latter city *versus* W. M. Thackeray, Esq.—the rulers of those abodes of learning are but dimly acquainted; but it is singular indeed that none of the

censors of old have been able to point out to them, by analogy, the ludicrousness of their position in respect to these honorary degrees. Is it to prove their power of adhesion to the ecclesiastical dogma of inherited sin, that they have invented this more abstruse one of their own?—that an individual shall be exempted from an intellectual ordeal thought necessary for the rest of mankind, on account of his having had a great-great-great-great-grand-mother *who never herself passed it*. Had the Lady Eleanor Plantagenet acquitted herself in the senate-house in such a manner as to call forth the particular eulogy of the then examiners, at any (however distant) period of the world's history, we should be able to have a glimpse (though a very little one) of reason in an edict which absolves her descendants from all future trials; but this of course she did not do. Nor, similarly, had any of the forefathers of Lords Yornoway, Courtwell, &c., so distinguished themselves. We must search, we fear, for the springs of action, in those who still continue to grant honorary degrees and immunities from "little-go," not 'neath the crystal waters of reason, but in the muddy depths of an impure snobbism.

Mr. Legion, as usual, found an argument in favour of the privileges of young noblemen, where other folks would scarcely have thought of looking for it.

"How often," thundered he in the Unionic chamber, "how often have we groaned in spirit while sitting in the university church (oh, oh, and hisses); 'oh' stands for nothing, Sir, and as for those who hiss, I am not addressing such as they, who never probably do go to St. Mary's,

but those who, like myself, are constant attendants, and who, I am sure, will bear out my assertion. How often, I repeat, have we groaned in spirit in listening, there, to sermons that we could not understand, and how seldom have any of us gone thither except from a sense of strictest duty. Yet these unfortunate young noblemen have to take their seats in 'the Golgotha,' remember, Sunday after Sunday, immediately in front of the preacher, forming the lay figures (as it were) which he uses as the subjects of his declamation, dazzled by the immediate neighbourhood of half the mathematical and classical luminaries of this hemisphere, and having to listen, it may be, to a long special prayer for the continuance of Browning College. For these wretched victims to duty, Sir, it is clear that some privileges ought to be provided."

Despite, however, of the advantages which royal descent entailed upon Mr. Muggins, Robert Birt was the only man of his own standing who was so fortunate as to gain a scholarship at St. Boniface in this, his first university year. This position was not much pecuniarily better than that he had enjoyed before, for he could not of course retain his sizarship as well; but in losing that, he became no longer subject to any of the little unpleasantnesses appertaining to the lower grade. He was no longer receiving, as it were, a benevolence from the funds of the college, but an income, instead, of about the same amount which was due to him in consequence of his own exertions. He had experienced, too, all the circumstances of a college examination, and having acquitted

himself so well in it, felt his foot firm and sure upon the lower of the two steps of which the upper was the fellowship itself. The congratulations of those of his friends who knew his circumstances, were most ardent, and none more so than those of Gaylad and Muggins, his disappointed competitors.

As he came out of chapel upon the evening on which this good news had been promulgated, one from behind took hold of his hand and shook it heartily; nor had Robert Birt the ill manners to withdraw it, when he perceived that the greeting came from his sincere well wisher, Mr. Plantagenet Hollis, who thus made friendship with the young democrat, whether he would or no, for the second time. Mr. Ruff Diamant greeted him with quite an affectionate grip; Mr. Swaysive dowered him with some remark which set his cheeks modestly tingling, but which was not one whit less genuinely kind because it seemed to fall as gracefully as though it were the setting of a crown of flowers upon the young scholar's brow.

Mr. Swete Smyler, who was not his tutor, and who had no sort of business to be so paternal, carried his hand in his own from the gates of St. Boniface to Rembroke College, whither he happened to be bound upon some missionary enterprise. Mr. Cardan Bracket, with the tears in his eyes, began to quote from the "In Memoriam," "Who breaks his birth's invidious bar, and grasps the skirts of happy chance," but there interrupted himself with, "it wasn't altogether chance, I hope, however, old boy; let us look at your examination papers."



Mr. Stedfast wrote him an encouraging letter ; Mr. Candid and Mr. Pluckit each a delighted one. Everybody who knew him, indeed, rejoiced with Robert Birt, with the single exception, perhaps, of Fitzherbert Cavendish Binks.





## CHAPTER XX.

### MR. FIELD'S MISSION.

**A**S soon as Robert Birt found himself scholar of St. Boniface, and in enjoyment of an income *in all* of £160 per annum, besides the pretty certain £30 upon the recurrence of every May examination, he wrote to Mr. Candid upon the matter of securing to him his loan by the insurance of his (Robert's) life for the next ten years. He had made up his mind, since he had two years to spare before his degree, and nearly three before his fellowship examination came on, to take private pupils, by which, indeed, his revenues would become considerably larger than he had any occasion for. The £90 a-year which he calculated upon receiving from the college alone, in addition to this contemplated pupil-money, would indeed have been fully sufficient for him to live upon, even had he dispensed with the school-master's £100 per annum entirely, and he offered, in fact, at this time, to do so. [Had his talents laid in the classical direction rather than the mathematical, he would

have been certainly able to have obtained by university scholarships, or other open prizes, a better income still.] The generous schoolmaster wrote back, however, a bantering letter, informing his young friend that he, the lender, was not going to be deprived of so safe and profitable an investment for his money as he had already obtained, and that as to any surplus which the bloated collegian might have in hand, were there not some poor folks that had a sort of claim to it? Had not Mr. Field, in one of his letters to Birt, mentioned a certain wet-nurse, who, before Alma Mater took him, had nourished the ungrateful boy? Finally, in case of any further attempt on the part of the young scholar to erase or alter the conditions of his present bargain, Mr. Candid threatened to refer the matter to his personal friend and legal adviser, a certain Scotch Jew attorney, of Flint Street.

Thereupon Robert determined to shake off all anxiety upon his benefactor's account for the present; and he set himself to work very vigorously, for the next eighteen months or so, in picking up the gold and silver upon the academical Tom Tiddler's Ground, with a success that surprised himself. At the conclusion of that period he wrote Mr. Field a letter such as caused the good surgeon to wipe his spectacles (for he had taken, alas! to spectacles by that time), in order to remove the traces of the emotion which the news of his godson's success, and, still more, the evidence of his merit, had excited within him. So large a sum of money—"to be presented to my kindly nurse, and to any others who may have been

pitiful to a poor orphan, in such proportion as seems to you to be the most proper"—accompanied this communication, that Mr. Field went in person to the dwelling of the tailor's wife in Rag Street to deliver it. It would have been more gracious, perhaps, for Robert to have gone himself, but his time was then fully occupied at Camford in preparation for his degree, and the expenses of a journey to town must needs have diminished the amount of his affectionate donation. For all the wealth and honours which had been steadily flowing in upon Mr. Field, he had not diminished his personal exertions among the poor, and yet he had of late years scarcely set eyes upon Mrs. Groves. That good lady, for some reason better known to herself than to him, had certainly shunned him; and although always more respectful to him than to any other mortal creature, seemed to be relieved whenever their rare and short-lived interviews were closed. Years had had their softening effect upon the character of Mrs. Groves, though not upon that of her husband, whose honest heart politics kept always fenced around with armour of triple brass. All their children were grown up and out in the world, and the gudeman and his wife dwelt, Darby-and-Joan-like, under the same domestic roof (only that they had moved into an upper story for the sake of cheapness) as ever. They were engaged, when the surgeon made his visit, upon a similar dish to that which had been on Volney's table when Robert Birt the elder had called upon him on the matter of standing godfather to his son, nearly twenty years before. It was that of greens and

bacon, very properly so denominated, and not bacon and greens, insomuch as the vegetable was out of all proportion to the meat. It is surprising how often the Chartist-tailor had partaken of this simple fare without inconvenience, when we consider how many persons there are of our own acquaintance who turn from even the greatest delicacies, if served for three days running, with loathing. Volney Groves was even glad to get it!

"I have brought you some great news, Mrs. Groves," said the surgeon gravely. (He did not like poor Volney, nor make sufficient allowance for his violent language and somewhat grim opinions.)

"Indeed, Sir," said the tailor's wife, colouring visibly; "I hope that it's good news."

"A young gentleman who was at one time under great obligations to you, is anxious to show himself sensible of that, by the offer of——"

"Nothing from that young Hollis, I hope," interrupted the old man, looking up angrily from his food; "my wife suckled him, and I saved his life, but not one word of thanks have either of us ever heard from *his* mouth; and it comes too late now."

"You needn't be so violent, Groves," replied Mr. Field quietly; "the money I bring with me is not sent by the person whom you imagine, at all; Robert Birt himself, now a scholar of a great college at Camford, and who is likely to distinguish himself very highly (as he well deserves to do) in years to come, has requested me to present to your wife—who took him, although it was but for a little while, from his dead mother's arms—with

his kind love (albeit he does not recollect her), the sum of thirty pounds ; and there are twenty pounds also for the little girl who afterwards had charge of him, Maria Keggs."

"I'll take it," said Volney Groves stoutly, and with the air of a man who confers a favour ; "tell him I'll take it thankfully. I need not have been afraid that any of your dirty aristocrats would have done a thing so generous, indeed."

Mrs. Groves sat as pale as death, without uttering one word.

"Come, come," said Mr. Field kindly, "don't take on so, my good woman, at a little unexpected good fortune like this ; I should have thought that you had been more of a philosopher."

"Did Robert Birt, little Robert Birt, really send this to me?" cried she in a plaintive voice. "I can't take it, Sir ; we can never touch it, Sir. Good lad ! poor lad !"

"Oh, he's got money enough and to spare, Mrs. Groves, if you mean that," said the surgeon ; "he has quite fulfilled that prophecy that you made about him soon after he was born, if you remember. 'The boy has got a mole under his left foot,' you said, 'which is always a sign of wealth ;' whereupon I remarked, that it was the only sign of it, I feared, that we were ever likely to see in him ; and now, you see, it has turned out that you were right."

"Where's Master Hollis, Sir?" enquired the woman suddenly, keeping her eyes fixed upon an untasted piece

of bacon poised upon her fork. "I hope he's well ; I trust——"

"What the devil," broke in her lord and master, angrily, "what the devil should you be hoping and trusting about him? He only wants years to become as great a villain as his father. When he does condescend to put his foot upon the pavement, he walks as if earth was not good enough for such as he to tread upon. He's a chip of the old rotten block, if ever there was one."

During this little declamation Mrs. Groves had been engaged in looking into two little closets, which opened from their apartment, and in locking the door ; and not till these precautions were concluded did she resume her seat at the table, and commence in a low but very distinct voice to unbosom herself concerning a certain secret.

"What with my husband's talking such talk as that, and what with that I have seen and felt myself, as a poor woman, I have never loved rich folk, and still less lords and such like. How hard it seems, I have often thought, that one should be heir to so much more purple and fine linen than he has ever any need of, and another to utter nakedness and want, such as ours, and worse. How purely a matter of chance it seemed to me—although I have long since discovered to my bitter sorrow that one should not put aside the finger of God in this matter, or think to order things better than He—was the happiness or misery of the life of any one of us, depending as it entirely did upon the station of life in which we chanced to be born.

How unfair, and even cruel, the arrangements of Providence appeared to be. Now, while in this temper of mind, poor dear little Birt was left to me by his dying mother, friendless, and poor, and helpless ; and almost immediately afterwards, the present wicked Lord Rexham raised all my evil passions to an unusual height by ordering me, as he would have ordered a dog, to accept the bone that he threw to me in the form of wages, and to forsake the little creature who had no one on earth to look to but me, for his own infant just born to luxury and honour. Although I ardently desired to pay back this proud bad man in some way which he should deeply feel, the idea never entered into my brain of changing the two children, until some time after I had been in his house. But when he talked to me one day of the poor child being entered into a burial club, so that its death might be a good thing to its father, as it would certainly be to everyone else, I swore to myself that this haughty, hard-hearted gentleman, who was to be one day a lord, should suffer in the person of his own son for his scorn of us poor folks,—that his very heir and the hope of his house should endure all the miseries of poverty, while the poor boy, Robert Birt, should usurp all the privileges of rank and wealth. I rose up in the night, and took the infant from the side of Maria Keggs, and laid young Hollis in its place : ‘This piece of tape,’ said I to myself, exultingly, ‘which Sir Toby Ruffles has placed around young Dives, is the sole security upon which this unconscious child has to rely for a life-long course of prosperity, while the absence of it will ensure young Lazarus his sores !’ I



changed these children as I am a sinful woman. Mr. Hollis is but the offspring of his supposed father's coachman, and (nothing but this evidence of the goodness of the kind young gentleman who sent me this, should wring the confession from me) Mr. Birt is indeed the son and heir of Viscount Rexham."

Across the doctor's countenance, when this narration was ended, there flitted no small gleam of doubt, arising from the idea that this might be some desperate attempt of the impulsive woman's to serve her benefactor; but then he thought of the mark which he had himself referred to upon the foot of the child that was born in Bulbul Mews, and was convinced that what she said must needs be true. Any attempt to overthrow the testimony of nature, which he had it in his own power to corroborate, the woman must have seen to be fruitless. Volney Groves never doubted for an instant.

"Woman, woman!" cried he, "you have brought a disgrace upon my name that not a prison in England could have brought upon it. I might have been sent to gaol by an unjust law, and so remained pure from crime; but now—oh, Mary, Mary! forty years have we two been man and wife, and never have I regretted it before this hour!"

That proud neck was bent at last, the armour about that heart had given sudden way before the shock of shame. Volney Groves was seen to weep by a fellow-creature, for the first time since his childhood. Mr. Field pitied this iron man with all his soul, but he had to perform his duty, nevertheless; he had been setting down

in his note-book the heads of this statement of the poor tailor's wife, and now he turned towards her and said, gravely, "Mrs. Groves, if what you have said be true, it is of the greatest importance, lest anything should happen to you before the matter be legally investigated, that you attach your signature to this strange confession, and you also, Volney Groves, as you are an honest man."

"Well now," cried Mrs. Groves, with an attempt at a laugh, "I had no idea that you would have been so taken in, doctor, and much less that my husband there would have been so. Lor' bless you, it was only my fun from first to last."

The poor woman was, alas ! as white as a sheet, and did not at all bear the appearance of a person who was playing a practical joke.

"Give the paper to me," said Volney, hoarsely ; "I will set my name as witness ; it is all true, too true, I am well persuaded. Wife, wife, have I not seen you an altered woman since you did this thing ? Have you ever, through the many years since, had a quiet conscience ? A child could have known that there has been something upon your mind these many years, and think you that I was blind to it ? But oh ! that it should have been such a secret as this, Mary ! How shall I ever, ever, hold my head up in the parliament of the people again ?"

The stern old Chartist set his own name in the note-book in as firm a hand as that with which the Republican Antony pricked down his sister's son among the list of the proscribed, for the public good.

"Let me write too, then," said Mrs. Groves, resignedly, when she saw this done ; and she signed it.

"And here is my name," added the doctor. "For your sakes, and for the sake of those most interested in this matter, you must promise not to speak of it to mortal ear until the proper time has come."

"It is not likely that we shall," said Mrs. Groves, excitedly ; "I wish that it had never passed my lips ; you look so strangely at me, both of you. What did I gain by it ? Am I a thief ? Good God ! what are you thinking of me ?"

Volney Groves rose up very pale, but trembling not at all ; and walked round to the place where his wife was, and kissed her tenderly upon the cheek. Then she began to sob and cry for the first time, hiding her head in her hands.

"Mr. Groves," said the doctor, "I have misjudged you sadly ; we must be henceforth friends. Perhaps this news will not be, after all, so bad as it seems ; I will go bail for this, that the man whom your wife has wronged will be the last to harm her ; nay, more, that if he stood within this room now, and had but just heard the words that we have listened to, he would say, as I do, 'Here is the cheque, my honest friend, still, and much good may it do you.'"

"And is it your new opinion of me, Mr. Field," replied the tailor, proudly, holding the paper (which represented, probably, a greater sum than he had ever possessed) between the tips of his thumb and finger, as though it were pollution to touch it, "that you believe me to be

the sort of man who would accept *this* ?” In the next instant he had torn it into three pieces, and returned it into the surgeon’s hands, impatiently.

“Leave us, Sir, leave us, if you please,” cried Volney Groves, “you have brought us plenty to think about in your absence, without any fear of our being dull.”

Such a sardonic expression lit up the old man’s features, that Mr. Field could not help saying, as he left the room, to him, “Groves, be kind to your wife, don’t harm her; you don’t know how far you may have been the cause of her fall, yourself; she has much good in her despite all this.”

“She is still worth two of me, at all events,” coincided her husband, with great sincerity.

“Good-bye for the present, my good fellow,” replied the surgeon, much reassured.

Besides the scene he had just witnessed, Mr. Field had a great deal of matter to occupy his thoughts upon his road home. Buried in contemplation, and with his eyes fixed upon the ground, he was traversing one of the cross-ings of Bulbul Square, when he came with such violence on an old gentleman going in the opposite direction, as to drive him off the pathway under the rear of a water-cart, which bespattered his nankeen inexpressibles (for he was dressed in the then height of fashion) in a manner easier to paint than describe. The stream of recently-invented imprecations which issued from the lips of the aggrieved party was, in a certain restricted sense, creditable to the ancient sinner, as proving him to have kept pace with the age. Had the disconcerted surgeon never

caught sight of the raven wig, the brilliant teeth (late the property of a hippopotamus upon the river Nile), or those crow-footed, but still licentious eyes of the blasphemer, he must still have recognised Henry Viscount Rexham at first hearing. No other, even among all the sporting noblemen of Great Britain, could have expressed himself extemporaneously in such elegant, or, at least, in such flowing terms. After the first three minutes, Lord Rexham began to recognise his antagonist, and to allow that he had been a little too warm in some of his expressions. His excuse must be, he said, in not being in a very good temper, in consequence of having pledged himself to go down to the House of Lords that evening in order to vote against an educational bill sent up by the Radicals of the Lower House, for the purpose of making the people discontented with their condition, and with the ulterior intention of unchristianising the whole country. This effort of senatorial duty (although his modesty forbade him to mention it) was the more irksome because it would rob him of several precious hours, which he had intended to have devoted to the shrine of Mr. Crockford. "Poor wretch!" thought the surgeon, with his fingers visiting the very pocket in which lay Mrs. Groves's confession, in order to assure himself of its safety, "I believe that you would tumble to pieces with a curse this moment, and trouble the world no more, if I were to tell you the news which I am carrying now."

The first thing, clearly, that was to be done, was to go down at once to St. Boniface, and convince himself of the identity of young Hollis, who was born twenty years

before in Bulbul Mews. So, on the next morning, being the fifteenth day of May, upon a certain year in this present century, the anxious surgeon, having made such hasty arrangements as he best could for the visiting of his patients by proxy during his absence, took his place in the Camford coach for St. Boniface. He enquired at the porter's lodge for Mr. Hollis's rooms; for it was he who was to be pitied in case things were, indeed, as Mr. Field supposed; and the good man wished to ingratiate himself with the youth, both that the breaking of the black intelligence to him might be made the easier, and that, having become his friend, he might the more reasonably appeal for the best terms for him to Robert Birt; for although he had spoken so confidently of the latter's generosity to Mr. and Mrs. Groves, he was aware what evil changes sudden greatness and unlooked-for prosperity produce in the very best of us; nor had he, indeed, that absolutely personal knowledge of the young scholar which would probably have set him at ease.

The fellow-commoner had removed from his in-college rooms to very splendid apartments over a linendraper's in the town, and, having a spare bed-room at his disposal, he insisted, with great warmth, upon the doctor becoming his guest. Mr. Field had arrived in time to dine with him in hall, and he had invited some men that very evening to wine with him at his own rooms, so all, he said, was well. Although the guest would infinitely rather have been *tête-à-tête* with his unconscious host, he of course acceded with a good grace to these arrangements.

College life was new to Mr. Field, and, as he sat at the high table by the side of his entertainer, the scene beneath him was striking enough to withdraw his mind from the subject upon which, ever since his visit to Rag Street, it had been unceasingly fixed.

"Those gentlemen who cut and hack their joints of meat so disreputably, are, I suppose, undergraduates," said he ; "but why, if you will excuse the somewhat professional remark, "are they all waited upon exclusively by monthly nurses?"

"I cannot really tell," replied Hollis, laughing, "although the case is certainly as you say ; nor do I know why they have always placed before them that innumerable array of pap-boats."

"I thought those must be grace cups, or something of that kind," observed the stranger ; "nobody has yet touched one of them."

"Nobody ever does," said Hollis ; "it's melted butter ; but, as the cook never gives them any fish to eat with it, it is rather superfluous. They have, on the other hand, to pay extra for ever so small a piece of cheese."

"Those gentlemen on our right seem to be having a better dinner, do they not?" asked Mr. Field, whose *forte* was observation.

"Oh yes, much better ; and they deserve it ; they are the scholars of the college ; the young man at the bottom of the table, with the laughing eyes, is our St. Boniface jester, Legion ; you will see him to-night at my rooms ; nobody ever expected that he would have been a scholar."

"And who is that older-looking student opposite to him,—he with the fine head and broad forehead?"

"That is Birt—Robert Birt; who when a lad was brought up with me, if you remember, in Bulbul Square; a noble fellow, but with a twist in his mind about social matters. He won't wine with me to-night because Courtwell will be there. He detests our fellow-commoner gowns as a bull hates a red rag."

"The grapes being sour?" replied Mr. Field interrogatively.

"No—to do him justice—upon less selfish and more general grounds than that. Do look at Whitlove anointing himself with the rose-water, all the time the grace is going on,—the delicate heathen!"

Mr. Hollis's wine-party was, like all other great wine-parties in the May term at Camford, a stupendous desert without the dinner; Himalayas of ice in moulds, and quite a Frozen Deep for cobbler. The noise of the suction, the playing on the pipes of straw, might have been heard across the street.

Even the lively Legion could scarcely spare from the anything but flowing bowl, time enough to relate to the company his budget of facetious news.

"Swete (suck) Smyler (suck) absolutely (suck, suck) said a very good thing this morning (suck, suck, suck, suck, suck)."

"Legion is now going to tell us something of his own," whispered Hollis to Mr. Field, "which he has chosen to put into the mouth of his tutor, who is also a sort of amateur dean."



"I have not kept any morning chapels this term (suck) on account of the inclemency of the season (suck), and perhaps some little personal indisposition likewise (suck, suck, suck); so Swete Smyler, who has no sort of business with it at all, chose to write to me one of his celebrated letters yesterday." (Suck, suck, suck, suck, suck.)

"They are slightly ungrammatical, are Mr. Swete Smyler's letters," observed Hollis to his guest in explanation.

"'Mr. Swete Smyler presents his compliments to Mr. Legion (suck), and requests to know, having been out after twelve o'clock for the last four nights, as well as most irregular at lectures, why he has not attended one single morning chapel during the present term. A personal interview at two precisely would, I think, be preferable to a written excuse.' There is the document, and a very pretty specimen of English composition too," added the narrator, flinging down a thin slip of paper a good deal like a writ, and sucking away at his straw, as though he were an air-pump.

"The reason that I gave to Swete Smyler for my non-attendance at chapel was the very early hour at which the service was held, and the sensitiveness of my digestive organs to cold. 'Consider,' said I, 'Mr. Swete Smyler, consider the coats of the stomach!'

"'And pray, Sir,' replied he, 'if it can't come out in the cold air what is the good of your stomach having a coat?'"

"And that was the good thing, was it?" enquired

Courtwell, insolently. "I call it 'poor,' though it was not your own."

If Hollis had not promptly interfered and proposed vanjohn, there would have been what is popularly termed a bear-fight.

"Talking of cards," said he, while the table was being cleared, "our friend Robert Birt hates cards with a ludicrous vehemency, and yet to my extreme wonder I caught him playing beat-my-neighbour-out-of-doors—the only game he knows—with a sick friend upon a Sunday."

"I am very sorry to hear it," remarked the good doctor, gravely.

"And yet it was certainly an unselfish and, perhaps, as he himself contends, even a truly Christian act," urged Hollis; "the card-loving invalid could have got heaps of friends to play with him on other days, you see. You will find Birt does not reason from the surface of things even when he reasons wrongly."

The mirth around the *vingt-et-un* table soon grew fast and furious; the noise, to Mr. Field, who did not play, and to his young host, who also stood out from courtesy, seemed absolutely frightful. The impatient "I double you," of Lord Courtwell, who almost always purchased the deal, rose above the clamour like a speaking-trumpet, for storms of this kind were his lordship's natural element. In the midst of a gust of uproar, more violent than usual, the master of the house stepped in and whispered to Hollis, who nodded an assent, and then observed to his company:—

"I am very sorry, but it seems that there's a poor

fellow, one of the linendraper's assistants, very ill—dying, in fact—in the room just over us, and this shindy is a little too much for him. It's very rude of me, but really I think we'd better       "

"Better go, of course," interrupted Muggins, rising; "adjourn to my rooms if you like. Poor fellow, what brutes he must have thought us!"

"He must have thought quite right then," said Legion, looking towards Lord Courtwell, who was going on with his deal, although but one or two had retained their seats.

"I am not going to lose my run of luck for a confounded counter-jumper," returned the young nobleman, angrily; "look here, I have got two aces; I draw on each; vanjohn,—vanjohn! I will thank you for eight times your stake, gentlemen."

His lordship uttered this very loudly, and again the linendraper made his appearance at the door.

"I am sorry to say, Sir," said he, looking at Hollis, "that the poor young man has just expired. Perhaps, Sir,       " the man looked round upon the company appealingly.

"Oh, dash it, if he is *dead*!" cried Lord Courtwell, "why on earth should we not go on with our game? our noise can't hurt him now."

Legion uttered that peculiar expression of intense dissatisfaction in vogue at the debates of the Union. "Good-night, *gentlemen*," cried he; and then with emphasis he added, as he left the room, "Good-night, *Courtwell*."

His lordship was past the power of feeling verbal sarcasm, yet he could not but discover that his vanjohn must needs be over for that night; so he rose and yawned, and with a lazy nod to his entertainer went out with the general stream.

"You are as disgusted as I am with Courtwell's conduct, I see," said Hollis, when he was left alone with his guest.

"I never saw anything so brutish," was the reply; but a reminiscence or two flashing across the surgeon's mind in connexion with Viscount Rexham, he added, "or at least more so, in all my experience."

"I don't think it is quite that," said Hollis, philosophically; "it is mere selfishness and perfect indifference to the feelings of an inferior. Lord Courtwell's inferiors have themselves most studiously striven to impress upon him that they have no feelings where his whims happen to be concerned, and he has taken them at their words. My own education has been an infamous one—a haphazard training quite unworthy of the name—but Courtwell's was much worse; he has been fawned upon from his cradle, and will be fawned upon to his grave, unless he chance now and then to wound the *amour propre* of such a man as Legion."

"You give but a bad account of your own order," said Mr. Field, thoughtfully.

"Well, it is not our own fault that things are thus," replied the fellow-commoner; "we are not born worse than other people are, but the misfortune is that we are not born one whit better; if we were, we might perhaps

be able to resist the influences of snobbism and ; we have a word to express it at the university, but it is a too frightfully vulgar one to repeat."

"I thought that public schools were supposed to amend something of that in our noble youth," remarked the surgeon, enquiringly.

"They are supposed to do so, it is true," said the other, "but they do not; though as a poor halfpenny-worth of bread amidst a most intolerable amount of sack, they may mitigate its effect. Lord Courtwell was at Winton many years. Our public schools are little better than rough-polishing machines. Rugby, I believe, was exception under its late ruler, Arnold; but the shock of ever so electrical a head man cannot give new life to more than the first two classes of a school at most—those nearest to himself."

"Then you believe that it is the system of hereditary aristocracy that is at bottom the thing to be blamed; you ought to know something about it yourself; but I confess my prejudices have hitherto been in favour of keeping things as they are."

"And long may they be so," cried Hollis, laughing heartily; "it is by prejudice alone that such as I live and thrive; we feed on poison, and it has no power except to do us good. It is this balsam of hereditary aristocracy which, being applied to the eyes of the middle classes, maketh us aristocrats to look like glorified Bottoms, whereas, in fact, we have most of us longish ears, and too many of us little better than goat's-feet."

"But whatever your vices," urged the other, "you are

certainly not generally so coarse, and even filthy—if I may be allowed to refer to some very recent conversation—as my Lord Courtwell.”

“‘We have a reasonable good ear in music,’” replied Hollis, laughing still, and still quoting from his favourite bard; “‘we like the tongs and the bones; only, we pray, let none of the people stir us. Leave us alone.’ I am certain Shakespeare prefigured the whole lot of us in the object of Titania’s affection. I should not, however, suffer Legion to hear me say this, of course, and far less Birt.”

“Then you don’t value your present position so very highly?” asked the surgeon, with the greatest interest in the answer.

“Oh, but I do though,” returned the other, “and nobody more so; I am not the man to look so showy-looking a gift-horse in the mouth, believe me. If I was not the Hon. Henry Adolphus Plantagenet Brooks Hollis, what on earth would become of me?” (Mr. Field’s heart sank within him.) “I am fit for nothing—absolutely nothing—except to be an hereditary legislator of Great Britain; it is my *spécialité*. I am surprised that you have not discovered this!”

“Ah!” replied Mr. Field, trying to laugh, “you were born with the mole under your left foot, which is the sign of power, I dare say.”

“Well,” answered Hollis, “singularly enough, although I never heard that saying before, now you mention it, I remember that I certainly have such a mole. Oberon never blessed my father’s bed in that respect. Here it is,

if you have a curiosity to look at it,—‘such a very little one!’ as Captain Marryat puts it into the mouth of the maid-servant to say, in apology for having had a baby,—but still a mole.”

The young fellow-commoner, who was somewhat excited by the events of the evening, bared his left foot as he spoke, with a merry laugh, and, surely enough, upon it was the damning spot which the surgeon had so dreaded to see.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### BRACKETED.

**I**N the next morning, while the two were breakfasting *tête-à-tête*, Robert Birt called upon Mr. Field. The young man's greeting to the good doctor was so very warm as much to surprise the host, who was unconscious of their mutual relation. "Perhaps," said he, rather bitterly, "you'll take a little food in your new friend's company, Birt, without choking yourself with the sense of obligation to a Spangle."

"Certainly I will," said Robert, cheerfully; "I will have one of those broiled turkey's legs. What do *you* give for a turkey at the St. Boniface kitchens, Mr. Fellow-commoner? A pensioner gives, in January, twelve shillings and sixpence, Legion tells me. I suppose you give a pound?"

"Twelve and sixpence seems a little dearish," observed Mr. Field.

"So Legion thought, who had ordered a boiled one and oyster sauce for supper," returned Robert Birt; "the bird was sent from the kitchen, but without the sauce,



which the pensioner's order of twelve and sixpence did not cover. So the next day Legion had an interview with his tutor, Ruff Diamant, upon the subject, in hopes of some redress, but all that he got out of that plain-spoken gentleman was this :—" Well, Sir, we have a good cook at St. Boniface, and we must pay for the luxury."

" Bravo ! very much bravo ! " cried Hollis. " I like his honesty ; that must have shut Legion up."

" Why, no," replied Robert, " he set his tutor's back up in return by replying that his idea was that it was *they* (Mr. Ruff Diamant and the Fellows, namely) who had the good cook, and himself and his brother undergraduates who had to pay for the luxury."

After the laugh excited by Legion's insolence had subsided,— " I should not have thought our friend would have had that pluck," observed Robert.

" Stop ! silence ! " cried Hollis, laughing. " I won't have my king of the butterflies broken upon your merciless wheel. This gentleman here is a democrat of the first mud, Mr. Field. Anybody who does not happen to be able to strike with the sledge-hammer ought to be removed, according to him, out of the great human workshop, and left to starve. As I am going to entrust him with your entertainment this afternoon, I think it right to give you that warning. I have an engagement of long standing, which must usurp my time for a few hours."

When Mr. Field had presently taken the arm of Robert Birt, and was in the street, the latter turned round to his companion and said, smiling, " Can you guess what Hollis's engagement was ? "

"Billiards, I should imagine," returned the doctor, "a ride on the road, or a pull on the river."

"No ; on the contrary, Hollis is now 'sporting' in his own rooms, and will there read mathematics hard for many hours to come. He is, with all his light ways, an ambitious man, and will make a very respectable figure in the class list."

"But have *you* no previous engagement of the same kind?" enquired Mr. Field ; "you, to whom success is of so much more importance. Is it not selfish of him, and indeed of me, to——?"

"No, no," interrupted Robert Birt, blushing ; "he is forgetful, that is all ; and as for you, I would not miss a walk in your company,—the first I have ever had in all my life,—for worlds. I set apart this day—the whitest in my calendar, be sure—to this very purpose, as soon as I heard, through Legion, that you were arrived. How much have I to hear, and you to see ! Shall we walk down the river bank, or shall we bathe in Byron's Pool, or ——?"

"Yes, let's bathe," cried Mr. Field, with eagerness, "or *you* shall bathe, at least, and welcome, while I smoke my cigar upon dry land." There was just a chance—a possibility—of this young man's having a mole under his left foot also.

"You like this life?" said the surgeon to his young *protégé* as they walked along the many-gated footway which leads to Fantchester ; "you would be content to be an inmate of St. Boniface all your days?"

"It is my hope, it is my prayer," returned Robert,

gravely. "I can think of no more happy—more enviable existence."

"Nay, but you are young, Robert, and you do not yet know what it is to love; remember, you must be celibate for your whole life if you would remain a fellow." Mr. Field tried hard to look as if he had a hopeless pining after some other nymph besides the *Pharmacopœia*, himself, but he might have spared that somewhat transparent piece of deception.

"I do know what it is to have loved," replied Robert sighing; and with Miss Sarah Jones in his mind's eye, he added, rather comically, "'It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all,' because there is less chance of one's being so weak a second time. I look forward to celibacy with no misgivings."

"With your talent, and, what is more, with your application," resumed Mentor, "there is scarcely anything, remember, that is beyond your grasp. You may one day—who knows?—hold up your head as high as any of those titled gentlemen who sit at the high table in your hall. Is it not a proud thought, Robert, to equal those who have, by birth, been placed so much above you?"

"'Their pride is yet no mate for mine, too proud to care from whence I came,'" retorted Robert, in the words of his favourite poet. "If I were fellow of St. Boniface, which, please God, I shall be within these two years, I would not change places with any peer in Christendom. I am not, however, very fond of peers," added the young scholar, in extenuation.

"And you mean all this?" asked the doctor, musingly.

"And I mean all that, if I know my own heart," replied Robert; "I am anxious now, and shall be until my end is gained, but I am very hopeful. My degree is yet six months off, during which time I shall work my hardest; my position in the class list will then be the index of my future chances of success. I trust I may not be punished for over confidence, but, if I have my health, I think my road lies pretty straight before me. I have much to be thankful for, and (I am proud to say it) many persons, also, to be thankful *to*,—you among the chief. Yonder," continued the scholar, pointing to the city on the level plain, with its countless spires and towers,—"yonder is the place which is far more to me than a birthplace to any other man. It is where I first experienced the real happiness of life, the spot where my youthful friendships have all been formed, the city of refuge wherein I was welcomed in my poverty by many a kindly hand. Mother! mother! *Alma mater!* if I ever leave thee, it shall not surely be of my own will."

"Why, you ought to represent Camford in Parliament," cried the surgeon, laughing.

"Not only is the town dear to me," continued Robert, "but every walk about it, this one by the willows and the winding stream especially. Look at the grand old church here, set in its lofty God's-acre; it is the graveyard of many an undergraduate who has had such hopes as mine! And now see the pleasant mill, misnamed of Crumpington, the scene of one of Chaucer's somewhat too genial stories. Look at the charming cottage where 'the miller's daughter' lives, or should live, who 'is

grown so dear, so dear, that I would be the jewel that trembles at her ear; and I would be the necklace, all day long to fall and rise, about her balmy bosom, with \_\_\_\_\_’”

“Come, come, Master Robert Birt, is this your training for celibacy?” broke in the surgeon, laughing; “you seem to learn other things besides the mathematics at St. Boniface, my friend!” And thus, their conversation seasoned with mingled jest and earnest, as conversation should be, the two reached Byron’s Pool. Whether or no the moody lord was wont, indeed, to bathe at that particular spot we know not, but there is a certain weird-like solitariness about it which is likely enough to have taken a fancy such as his.

“This is the place where my favourite young poet’s ‘Dying Swan’ sang his last melody,” said Robert, undressing; “ever the weary wind goes on, and takes the reed-tops as it goes, by this river brink; it is unpleasantly cold for a header, even in June.”

“Stop a bit!” cried Mr. Field, as the young Antinous, in the costume of a very early period of history indeed, was about to leap. “Have you not run a thorn into your foot?”

“Whir-whir-whir which foot?” asked the young man, his teeth chattering with cold.

“The left: no, I see I was mistaken,” replied the doctor, sadly. His last hope in the falsehood of Mrs. Groves’s story was taken away for ever.

The Robert Birt who emerged from beneath the water the next minute, like a water-dog, was himself no longer;

he had suffered in the surgeon's eyes a river-change into something rich and strange, and was the Hon. Robert Hollis ; while the present possessor of that title——

“Well, well,” said Mr. Field to his own ear, “there is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip, and it will certainly never do to unsettle his mind before his degree is over.”

The first words which greeted the doctor's ears when he reached his home in Brick Street, the next morning, were from his housekeeper, who opened the door herself. “Oh ! Sir, I thought you never would have come ; they have sent four times for you. Lord Rexham in Bulbul Square, Sir, he has been took with a fit.”

“Indeed !” said Mr. Field quietly, and ordered the cab-driver to turn his horse's head towards that quarter.

The calm manner in which even the most kind-hearted of doctors are accustomed to receive the very worst of news, is extremely remarkable. Had Lord Rexham chanced to have been the special hope and glory of this nation, the surgeon would not probably have been the least more “put out” about him, or have added a syllable beyond the brief “Drive quick,” to the coachman, which he uttered as it was. “All the cab-horses and all the cabmen” in London could not have taken Mr. Field, whither he was going, quick *enough* ; nor, might they have done so, would it have availed the Lord Viscount Rexham. Sir Toby Ruffles had been there a quarter of an hour ago, doing all that science could do for his noble friend, which was nothing. The fact was, the *Man* was already dead, a pitiful conglomeration of clay,—without

the wig, and the rhinoceros teeth, and the false calves, and the stays, a very terrible object. The *Lord* was now one of two young men at St. Boniface.

His last moments had been evidently passed in agony, by the expression that still dreadfully lingered upon his features. So sudden had been his seizure, that the servants had been summoned into the death-chamber only by his screams.

"The heart, I suppose?" said Mr. Field, looking towards his brother *Æsculapius*.

"Yes, Sir, the heart, the heart," wheezed old Sir Toby; "that disease of his was the only evidence that we ever possessed of his having had a heart at all."

Robert Birt "stayed up" at Camford during all that "Long," but it was a very cheerful vacation to him nevertheless. The extreme scantiness of the society during that period draws such few men as there are "up," more closely together, and transmutes the base metal of acquaintanceship into the gold or at least the silver-gilt, of friendship. Caps and gowns are at such a time almost unknown; the senior authority during that period at St. Boniface is often about five-and-twenty, and experiences the greatest difficulty in getting up a rubber.

A great deal of latitude is permitted in respect to morning chapel, and the gates are charitably left open until the second lesson. Robert once came in about five minutes after time, and found the dean and the chaplain alone, waiting for him; the burst (he did not know what other name to give it) of the opening note of the latter dignitary when he first caught sight of his congregation

of one coming through the ante-chapel, was such as the young man never remembered afterwards without a smile. If there had been no undergraduate, what would they have done *then* ?

Gyps roamed all Camford and its environs over, partaking of their absent masters' pleasures in their absent masters' clothes. Gyps rowed down the river in boats which had a most suspicious resemblance to the club boats, in their masters' caps and (very possibly) shirts ; there was no great difference, indeed, between them and the crack crews, except that the latter were certainly the better oars, and the gentlemen-coxswains far more copious in their swearing vocabularies. The university church did not fill so well by any means, of course ; that singular effect of shade produced by the placing of a thousand quadrangular caps before a thousand faces was wanting, for the faces were wanting, which—and why is it?—are not the handsomest, nor the most intellectual, nor even the cleanest in the university by any means. (We attended St. Mary's ourselves with the most rigorous punctuality, and may therefore be held innocent of any attempt at a false and stupid sneer upon this subject. The fact is, or was, as we have stated, and is worth the attention of the physiologist.) The hall of St. Boniface became a type of our social system, three separate degrees of man dining in the same chamber, but at an immeasurable distance apart, and the greater being apparently unconscious of the existence of the less. The warden was absent on an European tour, and engaged in convincing the world in general that there



is no other world to be compared with it ; and in trying to convince it that there is no other man in the said world to be compared to the warden of St. Boniface. The vice-warden had gone away with a very small carpet-bag, and a very large hammer, with the intention of procuring a few sparks from the central fire, to entertain his undergraduate friends with in the Megatherium Lecture Room, during the ensuing term. The Rev. Mr. Swaysive was roaming in the sunny South, with a beard and moustachios ; he had taken with him an eye for all he should see, an ear for all he should hear, and a notebook. Mr. Ruff Diamant was in Athens, proving beyond question to the inhabitants that they didn't understand their own language, and that if they did they would still be in utter darkness as to how to pronounce the same. Mr. Swete Smyler was perorating in that famous temple by the pleasant Strand, which is named (but surely not after Dr. Phillpots ?) Exeter Hall. Incense Flexion was in Rome, endeavouring to convince himself by means of Boccaccio's celebrated method, since any other was not very possible to him, that the Catholic religion was a good one. Of Robert's own companions, Cavendish Binks had disappeared from Camford for good and all. His career, as Legion tersely expressed it, had been brief, but voluptuous. He was supposed to be then looking out for a civil appointment in the public service, which he has since obtained ; he is a billiard-marker.

Legion himself was with the (now) Viscount Rexham upon an European tour, as the warden was, but not with precisely the same object. Gaylad and Muggins were

with their friend Birt, reading, walking, rowing, dining together every day. He was their pet man, and the hope of their year at St. Boniface. There were two men whom the next college boasted would be senior and second wranglers, and there was a mathematical wonder at a certain small college, who was to be in a class all to himself, he was so tremendous ; but next to these, and fourth in the list, at lowest, was to be Birt of St. Boniface. Almost all reading-men have the generous habit of setting up some idol of their own (before which they are themselves content to bow), sometimes with really golden feet, but not seldom with feet of clay, which at degree time crumble away terribly, and leave the god amongst the senior ops, to his worshippers'—and, what is worse, his backers'—inexpressible disgust. It is a bad thing for a young man (and we are, of course, speaking from experience) to be the hope of a reading-set ; and there are few who can bear it without becoming prigs. The classical prig is slightly the more obnoxious of the two kinds, since he has the more serviceable store of engines of offence ; but the mathematical is also very far from being an agreeable character. Robert Birt, however, was too good, too sterling a man to be ruined this way. His self-confidence too, it must be confessed, was of that nature that it was not easy for flattery itself to puff it up.

Nevertheless, when the time drew near for the examination, our young scholar proved no exception to the absolute rule of funk. He read sometimes, until he was fairly dizzy, and was loth to quit his studies even then ; one half hour more might have put him in possession

(who knows?) of some particular knowledge, which would be worth fifty marks to him in the senate-house. What if he was to fall ill, to have the rheumatism in his fingers, to get a cold in the head even, which should dull his wits! He tormented himself with thoughts like these. Well was it for him that Mr. Field, in innocence or carelessness of his own legal obligation, had determined to keep his secret to himself till the degree list was out at Camford. Small profit would it be, he reasoned, for this young man to find himself with ruined university prospects, heir indeed to rank and wealth enough, but without a shilling—where shillings are absolutely necessary—at the wrong end of a lawsuit.

To Lord Rexham, on the other hand, the surgeon was behaving with equal kindness: a good degree would be to him, also, of the very greatest consequence. Upon that issue might very possibly hang all his lordship's means of sustenance, when he should be lord no more. It is more than doubtful whether Mr. Field had any sort of right to put himself into the place of Providence, and hold the scales in this manner, between his equal fingers; but *certainly*, if the law had been in his position, the law would have done what it could to have ruined every individual concerned. Under the shadow of its protecting, but scarcely paternal wing, the chances, both of Robert Birt and of Viscount Rexham, in the ensuing class list, would have looked dark enough. The senate-house admits of no divided allegiance at the eleventh hour. Even the two Judeans grew paler and paler with sitting up later and later, and the small college

phenomenon himself waxed thin and reddened about the eyes.

Pitted against strangers with whom he has never before contended, no man, however unapproachable by his own companions, can hold himself sure to win. The event of the Camford examination for honours is, like the examination itself, always problematical ; and “there or thereabouts” is as much as can be predicted by any young student concerning his own position. At the commencement of the first day’s trial, the two from the mathematical college were the first favourites in the betting for the senior wranglership. Then, although the knowing ones scarcely fancied him, the *rara avis* from the duck’s-nest, from the small college. Next, perhaps, Robert Birt. Fifthly, a Pembroke man, crammed to repletion, and certain to win, men said, if he could only write quickly enough,—but all his fingers were thumbs. Sixthly (and the one who made the greatest sensation of the whole half-dozen) stood the young Viscount Rexham.

Never had a lord at Camford bidden so fair to invade, with a vengeance, the province of the wranglers before. He had read least of all the favourites, and reading, in mathematics, is well-nigh everything ; but he was the cleverest, the aptest, and the most collected, perhaps, of any of them. Nothing (that he knew of) was to be gained by his success, nothing to be lost by his failure ; he was going in for honours indeed. Still, when he stood at the gate of the senate-house upon the first morning of the examination, in the midst of that great sea of men, even

he was not without (at least) the sensation of one who waits in some ante-room of an extractor of teeth. There was an involuntary movement of the jaws, a dismal effort to be facetious, and a hollow mockery and pretence of being at his ease, which was but little palliated in his own eyes by the fact that everybody else about him was in an even worse condition. It was quite a relief to him, when the gates were opened, to rush in with the scrambling throng, as folks storm the pit-door of a theatre, although the spectacle that presented itself within was far from inviting.

Long broad tables, such as might well have become a school of anatomy, whose naked supports had every appearance of coffin trestles : quivers full of pens, layers of blotting-paper, were set before each man's seat, which was indicated by a slip of paper with his name upon it, such as a market-gardener puts upon a plant before it is ripe for plucking. A pair of proctors, in their sombre garments, sat at a little table in the centre, like a couple of severe inquisitors, as indeed they were. The silent examiners, their familiars, glided about the chamber, smiling treacherously, and trying to catch any poor fellow copying, if they could. This was of course after the clock struck nine ; at the first warning note of that hour from Great St. Mary's, the mighty sealed packets, wet from the university presses, had been torn open with the speed of lightning, and their contents distributed to the two or three hundred men in, at most, a couple of minutes. Not, however, without a complaint from one of the crack Judeans who sat at the eastern end, and

who grunted forth audibly that the others, at the western, had got an unfair pull against him.

The next instant not a head was to be seen erect. The Pembroke man was off like an automaton, the back view of him in his velvet-crested gown having very much the appearance of an animated penwiper: with him the whole matter resolved itself into a time-race. The rest were running their eyes from top to bottom of the examination paper. To the majority, every question excepting the first two or three seemed utterly incomprehensible, and especially composed for their own particular discomfiture; but when in due course they arrived at them, after polishing off the easier ones, some at least of the questions generally wore a more familiar aspect. The really good men began at the bottom of the paper, taking the stiffest of their fences,—the problems for which most marks would be given,—first. Some of them spent in this way half-an-hour, perhaps, over one single question, and after all had to give it up, but their reward when they succeeded was at least proportionate to the risk.

After the first two hours, the scratching of pens and the fluttering of foolscap grew faint indeed; three-fourths of the candidates for university honours were by that time what is technically called “pumped.” They had done “all they knew.” The eyes that were by that time turned up to the roof, fixed senselessly upon the proctors, dropped hopelessly upon waistcoat button or scarf-pin, nailed to the desk, and even concentrated upon the tips of their own included noses, were as those of

Argus. The hands that seemed to find relief in pulling whiskers, unbuttoning shirt-buttons, arranging the back-hair, and in drawing caricatures of the examiners, were as those of Briareus. Why, in the name of honesty and common sense, does not somebody get up and go? There are one hundred and sixty men who cannot do another problem to save their lives, and who are madly desirous to communicate to their friends outside what they have done, and yet not one of them is bold enough to confess as much by giving up his papers. Yes, there is one, at last. A jaunty youth sets his mouth in the form adapted for whistling, and pokes, as he walks out behind him, the ribs of the still studious Viscount Rexham; it is Legion, and the name of those who rise at once and follow the young man's example of departure, is Legion likewise. Not until that hour strikes which is the limit of the time allowed to them, do the rest of the competitors retire. The Pembroke man clings to his desk, and is only to be removed by the application of physical force. He has done all but the last problem, and he would have done that if a quarter of an hour longer had been permitted to him. Robert Birt has done all but the first problem. The crack Johnnians, the small college phenomenon, and the Lord Viscount Rexham, have "floored" the paper. But how floored? That is the question which not for weeks to come will be decided satisfactorily.

In the meantime, every day, or nearly so, is passed in the above-mentioned harassing manner. These terrible doses of mathematics have to be taken twice every twelve

hours, excepting of course the hours of darkness, which are taken up with static and hydrostatic nightmare; frightful reappearance of the conic section supposed to have been "floored" upon the preceding afternoon for ever; spiritual algebraic *formulæ*; impossible geometric curves; and ghastly unknown quantities, making night hideous.

At last the examination is over and the anxieties of the examinees begin. They have nothing now to occupy themselves in, save speculations about the class list, and they work at that diligently enough. Many go about declaring that they are hopelessly "gulfed," and making as though they would tear their hair, but who have a secret belief that they will be found among the senior ops nevertheless. Some, on the other hand, weigh openly the chances of their being wranglers, who will subsequently have to brush up their knowledge of the Greek Testament if they would insure going out in "the poll" or ordinary degree; one or two—but not so many as one would imagine—have brain fever, and don't care what happens to anybody. Robert Birt reads a little mathematics daily to let himself down, as it were, easy, and relax the brain, lest it should turn at once—not finding itself taxed as usual—into something like hasty pudding. Viscount Rexham plays a good deal at whist, for a similar reason; the college phenomenon takes the only exercise of which he has been capable since the struggle, in a wheeled chair propelled by his bed-maker in the grass plot set apart for his use by the admiring authorities of Minim Hall. The two favourites, Sap and



Cocker, by way of relaxation, are making some intensely interesting calculations about the moon. The Pembroke man is drawing up a petition to the heads of houses, praying that an additional hour in the senate-house may in future be permitted to the candidates for honours.

The class list is not yet out. This is the evening, however, of the day upon which it is advertised to appear. Robert Birt, Viscount Rexham, and a third person are closeted together in the rooms of the scholar of St. Boniface. The door is "sporting" fast, for that third person is Mr. Field, who is at Camford once more upon private business, important indeed to both his young friends. He has already told them—all.

"Adolphus," said he to the young nobleman, who had fallen forward with face within his hands upon the table, stricken with the terrible news, "God give you strength; and you, Robert, may He give you mercy."

"Mercy, mercy!" cried the poor fellow-commoner, without understanding what was said; "ah, do have mercy upon me. Confess that this tale of yours is a frightful jest; it cannot, can *not* be true! Robert, speak to me."

"I think it *is* true," said the scholar hoarsely; "I think it is, for many reasons; Hollis, Adolphus, friend, listen a little; you will trust me, will you not?"

"Yes, I will trust you," cried the other, looking up reproachfully at Mr. Field; "you will not play fast and loose; you will tell me what you mean to do; you will be generous, and not take all that is due. I must have money, I must have rank; I won't give them up with-

out a struggle—they are necessary to me, they are life itself to me, I tell you. My God, my God !”

“Don’t sob, dear friend, don’t sob ; and listen to me and good Mr. Field, to whom I owe so much, and who has meant so well, I feel, to both of us. Before taking any steps in this unfortunate matter—yes, Adolphus, a matter, believe me, most unfortunate as it seems to me, and most to be regretted—I ask, I demand of you both that this secret be not whispered, on your honour as gentlemen, on your oaths as Christian men, until such a time as I appoint.”

“I promise, I swear,” cried Lord Rexham.

“Mr. Field, for my own sake I ask this favour,” continued Robert ; “for my own sake, whom you yourself have said that you have wronged, promise me this.”

“I promise,” said the surgeon, after a little.

“It is well,” said the scholar solemnly ; “for the time which I appoint shall be never ; so help me Heaven, *never*. I make no claim upon you, Viscount Rexham, from this instant ; I leave it to your free-will to supply me with a certain sum of money (not a large one), at your convenience, for the repayment of a debt—the only one I owe—to a dear friend. I would not exchange my present position for yours, my lord, or for any other man’s in Britain. I believe most confidently that the news this night will make me a prouder man than any in your House of Peers. The course of life lies plain before me which I prefer to any other. I have no relatives. I do not intend to marry.”

The young lord threw himself at the scholar’s feet in a

passion of tears. "Noble, generous brother that you are, how shall I thank you? How shall I repay you?"

"There is no need," replied Robert, raising him up tenderly, "there is no need of thanks; it is even doubtful, remember, whether I should have gained this cause in a court of law. It would, at all events, have been a long, long struggle indeed."

"Would it, would it?" cried the young fellow-commoner with eagerness; "yes, I suppose it would. I hope so; though I fear that I am doing wrong in this business. Am I not, Sir?"

"Indeed," replied the surgeon, gravely; "I must leave this question entirely to your two selves; the collective wisdom of this country as represented in the Upper House will not, I hope, be sensibly impaired——"

"Robert shall vote," interrupted the young viscount, with a celerity that was almost laughable. "I will be his mouthpiece; I will be his proxy. Robert Birt shall vote."

A shadow flitted momentarily across the young scholar's brow as he thought of all the means of usefulness which he was thus voluntarily giving up, but he soon recovered himself. "How few there be," was his second thought, "who though they lay this flattering unction to their souls, do really make a rightful use of riches!"

"Mrs. Groves and her husband are to be relied upon, you are sure?" enquired Robert.

"Quite sure," replied the surgeon; "the woman's safety, the man's honour, depend upon their keeping silence."

There was a knock at the door, and Legion and Muggins both cried out together, "The list is out, they say. Come out, you two swells; what have you locked yourselves in there for?"

"Send them away," cried Lord Rexham, in a whisper. "I could not speak to them, I feel so faint and ill."

"Presently, presently," cried Robert aloud, "we shall be in plenty of time for the last few names, with yours among them; go away, you idlers."

The contrast between the calm and collected tones of the young scholar, and the shaken and vacillating speech of the fellow-commoner, was striking indeed.

"Come, Mr. Field," said Robert, "we must not let you miss the spectacle of this evening, for you may never have such a chance in your life again. Come, Adolphus, the cool night air will do us all good. The subject of our late conversation," added he, as he slammed the sporting door behind him, "is now, remember, closed for ever."

Why was it that upon the young man's countenance there sat a smile of happiness, such as no mere unselfish generosity, no voluntary surrender of the pomps and vanities of this world, could ever have placed there? Why was his heart throbbing with a delight in no way connected with the triumph which he believed to be in store and so near at hand?

It was past eight o'clock; but the class list, notwithstanding Legion's information, was not yet out. The unhappy examiners were still hard at the same work that had that day already occupied them eleven consecutive

hours. There was a dense black mass of men about the gates of the senate-house, which had been there since dusk. Few of them were there from motives of curiosity only, or interest in the fate of friends, but it was from those few that the tremendous reeling to and fro of that great assembly, and the somewhat boisterous witticisms which floated over it amidst peals of laughter, mainly emanated.

By far the greater number of those present were too personally interested in the result of the long deliberations to be proclaimed that night, for any sort of practical joking. To many—the working of whose countenances the dusk happily concealed, and who did not trust themselves to speak save in monosyllables—the news to be presently delivered from those steps were of the last importance. Sap and Cocker were there surrounded by a great throng of admirers from their own college. The Pembroke man was there, waiting patiently enough—he could not complain of there not being time to spare upon this occasion—and confident that what he had done was at least done well. The small college phenomenon had a telegraphic chain of friends extending from the senate-house to Minim Hall, and was sitting up in bed, expectant for the all-absorbing news. Birt and Lord Rexham stood at the northern corner of the crowd with Mr. Field. The last had wrung Robert's hand as he came along, unseen by his lordship, with a warmth that had convinced the scholar that the part which he had taken was approved by the good surgeon. One of the great folding doors is opened, and out comes the proctor.

He will read out the names of the wranglers from the top step yonder, and then the men will be admitted into the senate-house to see the rest of the list. A tremendous rush ensues against the iron gates which startles him not a little, and then a silence as of death itself. Many a heart beats painfully, many a limb trembles with fierce excitement.

"Senior Wrangler Cocker of Jude's," cries the proctor.

For the first time since Robert Birt came to Camford, his spirits sank within him, and the waters of bitterness came in even over his soul.

Amidst the roar of Judean congratulation he could still hear the whispered "Never mind, Robert," of Lord Rexham; the "What an infernal shame!" of the neighbouring Muggins; and the "Steady, steady," of Mr. Field, who could feel the lad's arm tremble within his own as the disappointment fell.

"Senior Wranglers," cried the confused official, correcting himself, "I mean, *equales*: Cocker of Jude's, Birt of St. Boniface!"

Such a cheer broke forth from that heaving mass, to be again and again renewed, as the tower of Great St. Mary and the theological schools, and the Senate House itself had never repeated in stony astonishment before. "Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer;" that is to say, the very Judeans cheered Robert Birt of St. Boniface.

"Lucky beggar, lucky beggar," cried Legion, dancing round him, "to have beaten even *me*!"

“Third Wrangler,” continued the proctor, “Humdrum of Pembroke (‘Well done, butter-fingers,’ from a personal friend, and lots of cheering) ; Sap of Jude’s ; Darkorse of Jude’s ; Muggins of St. Boniface (‘Three cheers for the Blood Royal,’ roared Legion) ; Lord Rex—no (immense laughter, not by any means shared in by the noble viscount himself) ; Gaylad of St. Boniface, Lord Rexham of St. Boniface, Tupnyhapeny of Minim Hall, &c.,” down to the end of the Wranglers ; the very last of whom—the golden spoon—was the too brilliant Legion.

Before the proctor had got that far, however, Robert Birt was again “sporting” within his own rooms, alone and in darkness, lest any friend, knowing him to be there, should insist upon coming in to shake his hand.

He had been upon his knees at prayer, but he was now sitting with bent head by his fireside—thinking, thinking. And while he thought the large rare tears coursed down his manly cheeks in quick succession. Was he weeping for the joy of that late glorious news, for the happiness which he knew awaited him in the congratulations of troops of honest friends, in the almost assured fulfilment of what had been, and was, his dearest ambition, in the pride which he knew good Mr. Candid and other fostering hearts would feel in his great success ? No ; not for that. Was he weeping for secret sorrow at having voluntarily put out of his own reach for ever those prizes of wealth and honour which were his by right ; the power of paying back scorn for scorn ; the steady sunshine of prosperity ? No ; not for that either. His thoughts

were dwelling far away from all these things and with the beloved dead.

“Mother, mother,” cried he aloud, as though she could indeed listen to his words, “I thank my God that thou didst call me son.”

THE END.





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